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[BRENDA STOOD LOOKING UP AT THE STARLIT SKY, AND ERIC FELT AS IF AN ICE-COLD KNIFE HAD BEEN PLUNGED INTO HIS HEART.]

THE VOICE OF THE TEMPTER.

CHAPTER IV.

ERIC FARQUHAR resolved that no one should guess what sentence of degradation had been passed on him by his grandfather, came down to dinner that night with as cheerful an expression as he could muster. The fates were against him it is true; but he had been in bad predicaments before, and always trusted to his luck or courage to pull him through; and both had never failed him—either the one or the other had brought him to *terra firma*.

He looked the picture of an English gentleman as he took his place at the dinner-table, dressed most carefully for the evening in a swallow-tail coat, low waistcoat, and spotless shirt of finest texture.

He would have looked handsome in the velvet suit of a day-labourer; but to-night, in his present conventional dress of the nineteenth century, Brenda felt him quite overpowering.

Cyril had fallen into the habit of putting on a short coat, which could do duty as a smoking jacket later in the evening, and it had not occurred to him to make any change in his habits because of his cousin's arrival.

Brenda was vaguely sorry that he had placed himself at a disadvantage, and she also became unpleasantly conscious of several strains upon the simple white cashmere, in which it was her custom to adorn herself for the evening.

Eric noticed every defect in her dress, but said to himself that nothing could spoil that beautifully-moulded creamy neck, or the head so daintily poised on it; and that one glance from those beautiful violet eyes would make most men forget everything else in the world but their owner. It seemed to him a shame that so lovely a girl should vegetate in a place like The Towers, not remembering that the pleasant life amongst old friends in a cheerful neighbourhood seemed anything but vegetation to the girl herself, who hadn't a wish beyond.

Eric's eyes wandered from Brenda to Cyril, and back again. He was secretly nettled by the way in which the former always referred

to the latter as if nothing could be done without him, and before dinner was over he had determined that the girl's affections should be given to him instead of to his cousin.

He had never found it difficult to win a woman's heart, and he could not believe it possible that so simple a girl should resist him.

"Pon my word, Brenda, I should not have stayed so long out there if I had known what was waiting for me here," he said, with an expressive glance from under his long lashes, as they sat together over dessert, Cyril having gone upstairs to his grandfather.

"Was the scolding pleasant, after all?" looking down at the forced strawberries which he had just placed on her plate.

He threw back his head, haughtily. "Scolding! I'm rather too old for that sort of thing. Let grandfather try it on somebody else—on Cyril, for instance; he looks as if he would take it like butter!"

"Nothing of the kind!" her eyes flashing angrily. "But he doesn't think it particularly manly to neglect an old man as soon as he is helpless."

Eric drew his brows together and bit his lip, but though he felt inclined to box her ears, he only said, quietly.—

"Very good of you to fight his battles so bravely. I hope he is properly grateful."

There was something in his tone, quiet though it was, that sent the hot blood rushing to her cheeks, and she immediately pushed aside her chair, and rose from the table.

"Where are you going to?" he asked, in surprise.

"On to the terrace, whilst you smoke your cigarette in peace!"

"Won't it be chilly?" with a slight shiver.

"For you, perhaps, just come from a warm climate. But for me there are such things as fur cloaks, and the storm has gone off," and she vanished through the door which led into the hall. She was just reaching up to unhook her cloak from its accustomed peg, when, to her surprise, it was taken down and placed round her shoulders by Eric. Then he took up his own light overcoat, and caught up a hat.

"Are you coming out?" she asked in surprise.

"Of course I am."

"But you haven't had enough wine."

"I hadn't had enough of you, which is of more consequence," as he walked towards the glass door which led on to the terrace and threw it open.

"I am sure I hope you haven't disturbed yourself on my account," she said, coldly, as she stepped out, and held up her face to inhale the fresh air.

"Soledly on my own," looking down into the pale sweet face which seemed like a breath of the spring to him. "Can't you understand, child, that I would rather be anywhere with you than alone with myself?"

"Certainly not," with prompt decision, "unless you have a very bad conscience."

"Brenda! Such a mouth as yours was never made to say such horribly spiteful things!" he exclaimed, angrily.

"Give your pardon," with a cruel smile. "I've often made it say the most horribly spiteful things, and if you stay here more than a day and a half you'll learn to expect them."

"How hard I've come to stay—broken at the same time—"

"Oh, yes!" mischievously. "Disappointed every pretty woman in the south of France, broken a hundred hearts, stopped fifty love-matches at the lowest computation, and left your own heart behind scattered in a thousand fragments. Really it's quite a conundrum for such a conquering hero to come and look us up," dropping him an elaborate curtsey.

"You little goose! Who's been stuffing your head with such unutterable nonsense?" not knowing whether to laugh or to be angry. "If you and I are together much longer you'll soon find out if I have a heart or no."

"Oh, dear 'no'!" scornfully. "You needn't think I'm going to advertise for its return."

"No need to advertise for a thing when it is in your own possession."

"Ah! When will that be?" with a wistful sentimental sigh. "On second thoughts I don't feel disposed to count on it."

"Why not on mine as well as on Cyril's?" with a glance like a flash of lightning into her grave eyes.

She did not blush overwhelmingly, but turned on him with a pretty rose-pink just fluttering over her cheeks.

"Who said I counted on it?—not Cyril, I'm sure. He's worth more than most people; but he thinks himself of no account at all. Ask all the people—the tenants, the servants. Don't they appeal to him if they are in any trouble? Don't they love the very ground he treads on?—wouldn't they almost break their hearts if he went away as you do?"

"A pleasant look-out for me!" dryly. "Do you remember that it is I who am bound to remain here whilst Cyril goes out into the world? Do you forget that when the old man dies, I am the heir?"

"And I—I shall go, too," her face colouring, and her eyes looking inexpressibly sad. "The old happy life will be over for ever! But don't talk of it," rousing herself with an effort. "Perhaps grandad will recover; and then you can go back to the people who are longing for you, and Cyril and I will go on just as we have always done!"

"You talk as if you had it all to yourselves!" this jealousy afame in an instant. "Have you forgotten that I used to be here as well as Cyril? He was not cock-of-the-walk then—when I was at home at The Towers!"

"Not cock-of-the-walk! Who cares about that? But he was always very good to me!"

"Try me, and I will be good to you—as good as ever you like! Come, Brenda!" with his winning smile, "why should you try to build up a wall between us, which I shall pull down the very next instant?"

"The wall is there," she answered, in her straightforward fashion. "I suppose it built itself whilst you were so long away. It can't be pulled down in a day."

"No; but you needn't add a brick to it every time you open your mouth; and you needn't pretend to dislike me, when I haven't been near you for years!"

She leant her elbows on the balustrade of the terrace, and looked thoughtfully over the park, where the distances were shadowy and indistinct in the growing darkness.

"Perhaps I dislike you because you stayed away so long, when you knew there was somebody waiting for you as the others were waiting for me," she said, slowly.

"Why didn't you send me your photograph?" he answered, with a laugh that jarred on her nerves. "That would have brought me sooner than any letter."

"Then I am sorry for you. You still look up at him with indignation, Cyril. And I would rather have sent it to the chimney-sweep than to you!"

"You are very foolish!" he answered, with a scowl, as he threw away his cigarette with a curse because it wouldn't draw when he had let it go out.

"I am trifling; which is more, perhaps, than you can say of your agreeable friends at Monte Carlo! You know best if you owe a debt of gratitude not to our grandfather. I have never forgotten what I owe him. He took me in and gave me a home when nobody wanted to have me," her beautiful eyes filling with tears. "He has taken care of me all these years whilst my own mother was wandering about the Continent, not troubling herself in the least about her child. Oh! I never meant to say that!" her conscience pricking her; "but when I think of all that grandfather has been to me I feel as if I would lay down my life—young as it is—that moment, if I could save him one pang of agony before he died."

She stood with clasped hands, looking up at the starlit sky, and Eric felt as if an ice-cold knife had been plunged into his heart. All his pride and self-satisfaction rolled away from him like a cloud, and left him stripped of all false pretence and excuse. He saw himself for once as others saw him, and held his peace in confusion and shame.

Brenda sailed away from him, her head boldly in the air, but her soft cheeks wet with tears. She had allowed her feelings to carry her away further than she had intended; but she had not said a single word more than the truth. Her love for Sir Peter was not measured out grudgingly grain for grain, according to the amounts she gave to her. She felt sure that he did love her; for he had given her a home and everything she wanted; but she looked for no loving caress, no tender words, for it was not his way to give them to anybody.

In her eyes he was the best, the noblest man that ever lived, and she loved and honoured him as if he represented in her youthful mind father, mother, brother and sister all in one. She had thronged him high on a lofty seat, where Sir Peter would have

been very much surprised to find himself; and those who did not bow down and worship him were not worthy of the name of Farquhar.

"Miss Brenda, wherever have you been hiding yourself?" The voice was that of Mrs. Seddon, the housekeeper, coming out of the darkness of the doorway. "Mr. Cyril's been asking for you this long time."

"Grandfather's not worse?" her young voice husky with sudden anxiety. "Oh! tell me—tell me quickly!"

"Now don't be frightened. Only the doctor's been sent for just—"

Brenda heard no more, for she had flown like a wild thing down the passage, across the hall, along the gallery. Oh! what a terrible distance it seemed before she stood at Sir Peter's door with her heart thumping in her bosom!

CHAPTER V.

CYRIL opened the door gently, and letting in, Brenda looking up into his face with the question in her eyes that she did not dare to utter with her lips. He was very grave, but smiled reassuringly, because it grieved him to see her usually bright face looking so troubled.

"He was very bad, but I think the pain is better now—at least, he breathes more easily," he whispered. "Be as quiet as you can, and perhaps he may go to sleep."

Together they crept softly to the bedchamber, and Brenda's heart sank to the depths when her eyes fell on the shrivelled form, the thin, bony hands, the drooping, nervous attitude of the man.

The first time she left the room, she suddenly that her beloved grandfather was gone from her, and all the colour faded from her little world, seemed to be breaking up into fragments. Instinctively she clung to Cyril, as was the one firm branch of the family tree which seemed in any way to belong to her; and he, laying his firm, strong hand upon her trembling fingers, calmed her at once with his touch.

Standing there they realised that they must be more to each other than ever in the coming future. Side by side they must stand through the storms and sunshine of life or else give up the struggle. To battle alone is almost impossible to the average nature; companionship gives strength, sympathy lends the power of endurance.

How often do we feel that if we could be two together we could do wonders, almost move the universe; but separated, we lack the motive power which would give the initiative to our own exertions.

They were confident with the blind confidence of youth, that as they willed it so it would be, in every trouble they would be together hand-in-hand, and every joy would be doubled because it was shared.

Happily for them, standing as they did—the one on the threshold of life, the other in the prime of his manhood—there was no Cassandra pointing with prophetic finger to the separating of the ways, when one would pass on this side, the other on that. Both had forgotten Eric, the only child of the old man's eldest son.

The doctor arrived—a funny, cheerful, little man, of the name of Whitehead. He was very sorry to think that his most profitable patient was dying; but, personally, he would not regret the Baronet as a friend. He had shared Miss Moreland's fear of him until he saw his "old enemy," as he called him, as a patient brought down on his marrow-bones and preparing to die. Then his medical soul asserted itself, and he was ready to do anything within reason for his patient. He locked very seriously as he felt Sir Peter's pulse, and shook his head before he spoke.

"A very critical condition, certainly!" he said, with his podgy finger on the thin-wrist. "As to the pain, I can relieve that by morphine; but the debility is alarming, as it increases so fast. The restoratives which I pre-

scribed have ceased to have their proper effect, and I scarcely feel justified in increasing the dose."

"But if they have lost their power, I should think it was the only thing to be done," suggested Cyril, with a tone of infinite sadness in his voice.

"Can't be done," said the doctor, shaking his head more vigorously than ever. "But I can change the anaesthetic. I'll send it round as soon as I get home."

"Can't you stay here for the night?"

"Utterly impossible. I am due at the Hall at eleven, but I promise to be round the first thing in the morning. Of course you won't leave him alone?" with a glance at the bed.

"I shall sit up all night," said Cyril, briefly.

"And I—I won't leave him for anything!" put in Brenda, resolutely.

"My dear young lady, we could not leave Sir Peter in better hands than your cousin's. You can take your turn to-morrow," and Dr. Whitehead turned away.

As Cyril followed him to the door, he asked if the Baronet had made his will.

"I think so—long ago. But he told me to write to Mr. Parkinson, and he's coming to-morrow," he answered, in an absent manner, which showed that his hopes were not centred on the all-important document.

"Humph!" and the little man looked at him with his bright, ferret-like eyes. "If the old will's to be altered, I fancy it won't be to your disadvantage, Mr. Farquhar; and I should advise Parkinson to hurry up."

"Oh, I haven't much to do with it. Eric's the heir, you know. But I'm afraid you must think my grandfather in a very dangerous state. Do you mean to tell me that the end is near?"

"Neither you nor I could tell exactly when; but it isn't far off. If he sees another sunset it's as much as I expect of him."

Cyril's face answered for him, but his tongue was silent.

"To-morrow!" he thought, with a shiver. "Can it be to-morrow? Oh, what shall we do without him—Bren and I?"

On the way downstairs, they came upon Eric, who shook hands heartily with the doctor, who had known him from his earliest boyhood.

They talked together for a few minutes, and then the doctor told Eric that he had only just arrived in time. He looked dreadfully shocked, and turned upon his cousin reproachfully.

"Why did you keep it from me? You knew that nothing would have kept me out there if I had known that it was as serious as this!"

"I begged you to come back as earnestly as I could," said Cyril, quickly. "I told you grandfather was very ill. I couldn't do more!"

"No, no!" and Dr. Whitehead looked sharply at each good-looking face in turn. "No doubt there was more to keep your cousin there than to bring him here. What is one old man compared with a host of pretty women?"

Then he went quickly down the broad flight of gray-stone steps, got into his dog-cart, and drove off; but as he went down the avenue of stately elms, he said to himself,

"As handsome a young dog as ever lived; but if he belonged to me, I'd label him 'dangerous' or shut him up. He's just come in time to spoil the prettiest match that was ever seen, and to ruin as comfortable a home-party as could be found in Blanksshire! I wish to goodness he had stayed away; but it's no affair of mine."

Dr. Whitehead, in spite of his most ordinary appearance and rubicond face, was a remarkably clever man, and knew how to take the measure of his neighbours.

He did not judge them, as so many do, by the extent of their acres, or the number of their servants, but rather by their own individual worth. And, judging them by this

standard, it often happened that those who stood highest in the eyes of the world were almost level with the dust in his opinion.

He had no doubt that Eric Farquhar, with his handsome face, and tall, straight figure, would win all the hearts of the neighbourhood; but he decided at once in his own mind, after that one penetrating glance, which looked through the young man's fair outside to the depths of the complex nature within, that his coming would bring trouble and pain to the small circle at The Towers.

"Poor girl! poor girl!" he muttered to himself. "It would puzzle a wiser head than hers to know what to do between the two!" and then he drove in at his own gate, up the narrow drive with the trim-kept lawn on either side; and, throwing his reins to the servant who ran out as soon as he heard the wheels, got down, and walked into the small hall from under a porch which in the summer would be covered with travellers' joy.

A door was thrown open on the right hand side, and a very pretty girl sprang into his arms.

"What! not in bed, little one?" he said, caressingly, as he patted her delicate cheek with his plump right hand.

"I knew you would be off again as soon as you came back, and I wanted to know how Sir Peter was?" said Flossie, as she slipped her hand through her father's arm, and went with him into the small office where he kept his bottles of drugs.

"It's a case of 'sorry to leave you, but go I must,'" as he released his arm, and lifted a bottle off the shelf.

He was accustomed to see the happy child, and the successful man of business, called away by the angel of death, and he could not find anything particularly sad in the summons coming at last to an old man who had played his part in this world, and might be supposed to be longing for the next.

But, to the young, death is always a shock, and Flossie exclaimed in genuine sorrow,—

"Oh, father! he's not going to die! What will Miss Farquhar do?"

"Without him?" regarding a measuring glass with careful attention, as he let a few drops of a dark, thick fluid fall slowly into it. "And so long as Cyril Farquhar continues to think her the best girl on earth, she will console herself easily enough."

"The other brother's much the best looking."

"What do you know of him?" looking up quickly from under his shaggy brows.

Flossie turned away her face.

"He was passing on his way from the station just as I was struggling to shut the gate over the way, and he came up so politely and asked if he could help me."

"Another time let the gate alone rather than talk to passers-by!"

"But, father, the cows would all have got out."

"Let the cows toss all the old women in the village; but just keep yourself to yourself, as the people say! I won't have Eric Farquhar, or any other insolent young puppy, dangling after my girl, so he needn't think it!" fiercely, as if the young man were standing straight before him.

"Father, he's not thinking of it," her cheeks like a flamingo's wings. "He wouldn't even know me again. It was nothing but the purest good-nature."

"Would he have been as good-natured to an ugly old woman? No, child; don't have anything to do with him, he won't think anything of you. I suppose he considers me about on a level with his butler! But so long as he pays my bill when all is over, that won't take away my appetite for dinner!"

"He's a gentleman, not a snob!" she said, indignantly. "But I've got a bit of supper ready for you in the dining-room, and I hope you've got an appetite for that!"

"Yes, Farquhar hasn't had time to take it away just yet. But good-night, child. Go to bed, and dream of your old father. He'll never

give you a heartache, or wet your pillow with tears."

She put up her face to be kissed, after a faint remonstrance, and went to bed, to dream of a handsome face, with glowing eyes half hidden by long silky lashes, as different to the doctor's as cheese is to chalk.

"I'll keep a sharp look-out," said Dr. Whitehead to himself or the stars, as he drove through the chilly night to visit his other patient at the Hall.

But what is the good of fathers looking out when men as handsome as Apollo look in? The latter generally have luck on their side—especially when there's a traitor in the citadel.

Flossie was the one bit of poetry in the doctor's prosaic life; and he guarded her with the jealous care of a miser for his gold.

Some day in the far-off future, when he met a man on whom he could entirely depend, he might, after a struggle, make up his mind to part with his child. Till then he prayed that angels might watch over her, and keep her in her maiden purity unspotted from the world.

Nothing rude or unseemly was allowed to come near her; scandal was kept from her ears; improper books were not permitted to soil her mind; and in her eighteenth year she was as innocent as the daisies that unbidden reared their heads on the grass.

CHAPTER VI.

"CHILD, are you there?"

Brenda started, as the words fell on her ears in a low, husky voice, which seemed as unlike her grandfather's as possible.

"Yes, grandad," she said, softly, putting her warm young hand on his cold fingers.

The touch seemed to revive Sir Peter, and he roused himself from his lethargy.

"I'm going—and I'm glad to go—all disappointed, all hopes blasted and shattered. I wish I had never been born!"

"Oh, don't say that!" her loving heart full of tenderest pity. "You've given a home to us all and what should we have done with out you?"

A grim smile hovered round his mouth, for he remembered that there would have been no Eric, Cyril, or Brenda, if their grandfather had never existed; but, as a sudden thought flashed through his weary brain, he raised his voice, and said with surprising energy,—

"Yes, and that home you shall have to the day of your death! Look here, child," his voice sinking to a husky whisper, "Marry the man who has The Towers. He's a good fellow, and will take care of you. Don't say a word they are coming, and God bless you. You've got your father's eyes. Now go!"

She bent down and kissed him, with the tears on her cheeks, feeling that she had never loved him half enough before, and then turned towards the door, her heart beating quickly in a wild tumult. Her cousins came in at the same time; but she shrank from Eric who was the nearer to her, and hurried to her own room.

"No, no, no!" she cried in the depths of her heart. "I never would marry Eric, not if he had The Towers and Windsor Castle to back him," and then she threw herself down on her bed and sobbed, for everything seemed to be slipping from her, as an old man was sinking slowly into the arms of death.

"I will take the first watch," Eric said, to Cyril's immense surprise. "You go to bed, it's nearly twelve now, and relieve me at six o'clock."

"No; if you won't go to bed, I'll stay with you." You've had a long journey and must be tired out."

"Whether tired or not, I'm going to do it, and you would be foolish not to go and rest. This sort of thing may go on for ages, and we must husband our strength."

"It won't go on, I'm afraid; but I'll do as you like," thinking it natural that his cousin

should wish to be alone as much as possible with his grandfather. He went out of the room, unwillingly, after giving Eric the most careful instructions as to the various medicines and their appointed times; and as he went, he looked back over his shoulder, thinking what a striking picture those two made—the old man wan, gaunt and feeble, with sunken cheeks and wrinkled brow, stern as death itself, sinking slowly but surely into the grave, the young man in the pride of his manhood—full of life and energy, with the beautiful face and the winning smile that had taught many a woman to love him too well.

It would be hard to say what had driven Eric to his present post. A glimmer of hope that he might prevail on Sir Peter to change his mind; jealousy—fierce, wild jealousy of the cousin who was to supplant him—or remorse for the past in which he had played so poor a part.

He sank down into a chair by the bedside with a heavy sigh, and leant his elbow on the arm of it, his head upon his hand. He was in an angry, defiant state of mind, and the Evil one stood very near his elbow in the silence of the night.

Pictures of the past came trooping through his brain like the passing slides of a magic-lantern, and always in these he saw the worst side of his grandfather's character. The affection that he had lavished on his grandson was forgotten, and the sternness remembered with which he often refused to fill his empty pocket after some foolish fit of extravagance.

Eric saw himself as a schoolboy, ordered to spend the holidays at The Towers, when he had made up his mind to enjoy himself elsewhere; desired to give up the friends of his choice for no apparent reason, except that they did not suit the fancy of a tiresome old man; denied the very pleasures on which he had set all his hopes.

Yes! he had been thwarted over and over again, and their wills had been in constant collision. Was it likely that now he would stand tamely by and see himself cheated out of the inheritance which was his rightful due—the inheritance on which he had counted so often in his dealings with money lenders, that he would be positively ruined and disgraced if it passed into his cousin's hands?

There was only one patch of light from the lamp behind the bedcurtain, the rest of the lofty room, panelled in black oak, was wrapt in intense darkness. One unhallowed thought came into his mind after the other, and he made no effort to drive them away.

If Sir Peter died to-night The Towers would go to the rightful heir—if he lasted twenty-four hours longer his cousin would step into his shoes. Twenty-four hours of ceaseless pain to the old man meant ruin to his grandson.

There could be no doubt of his suffering, for as he lay between sleeping and waking in a comatose state, a constant moan passed his pale lips, and surely it would be a charitable act to put an end to his pain. Pleasure was over for him, comfort had departed, and there was nothing to live for. Dr. Whitehead said death was inevitable—there was no chance of cure—and if he came with too laggard a step it could scarcely be a sin to hurry him.

If his mind had not been clouded he would not have wished to commit an act of gross injustice. It would be carrying out his reasonable will if he were prevented from undoing the fixed purpose of years.

Eric had often heard it argued that it would be for the benefit of mankind if those who were hopelessly insane or incurably ill might be put out of their misery. As for himself, he had often said that if he were suffering from some hideous disease he would bribe a man to shoot him.

Sir Peter was dying—nothing could save him. Who could tell but that his last hours might be a struggle of fearful agony? If he could go off in his sleep what a merciful chance it would be!

The joints of the furniture creaked, an owl passed outside the shuttered windows, curdling the blood with its weird screech; the wind mourned and raved, making every window rattle in its frame.

He turned with a strange sensation of horror to meet the gaze of Sir Peter's eyes fixed on him with a horrid stare which seemed to read the darkest secrets of his heart.

A cold shiver passed over him as the shrunken lips parted, one of the claw-like hands moved, and pointed a bony finger at a bottle on the table.

It was labelled "poison," but Eric knew it to be a narcotic of unusual strength, thirty drops of which were to be given if absolutely necessary.

"Give it me," in a hollow tone. "Quick! I can't stand this torture any longer!"

Eric stretched out his hands and took up the medicine glass and the small blue phial. His hands shook as if with palsy; a cold perspiration broke out on his brow. He started violently. Was it a step in the passage, or a rat behind the skirting-board? His head grew confused; the numbers mixed themselves together. A voice seemed to hiss in his ear,—

"Go on; don't stop!"

Was it sixty or thirty, that number there on the side of the glass where the mixture reached to?

"Confound you, be quick!" came the hoarse, eager whisper from the bed.

Hastily he put the glass to his grandfather's lips, and then by a sudden impulse half snatched it away. But too late, for every drop had been drunk in feverish haste!

Then he sat down, and cowered as if in the presence of some awful horror, every hair on his body standing erect, an icy chill running down his spine. He sat there like a stone, not moving so much as an eyelash, scarcely breathing; and yet whilst his body was so still, his mind seemed endowed with treble activity.

Scenes from his boyhood came before him; such different scenes to those that had visited him before. He was mounted on his first pony—the gift of his grandfather, and the old man was watching him from the window.

There was an accident to the train in which he was coming from school, and several passengers were killed; he saw the tears on the withered cheeks as he sprang into his arms alive and well. He felt the kind hand on his shoulder, heard the words of praise with which he was greeted after saving a favourite dog from drowning in the lake.

Another time when he came home, overburdened with the sense of unpaid bills left behind, and said he had almost made up his mind to go in quite another direction to The Towers, how the stern face relaxed as the old man said with a smile,—

"Never do that, lad. The money's nothing to me, so long as I get my boy!"

Oh! he had loved him like a father, and taken him to his heart when there was not a soul to care for the orphaned boy, and the sternness had been only a veil for the tenderness which he had wished to hide from a scoffing world.

In a paroxysm of remorseful tenderness, he slipped down on his knees and clasped his hands.

"Forgive me, grandad. I didn't mean it. Oh, speak to me—speak—just one word!"

But there was no answer. The grey head had fallen a little to one side, as if to rest more comfortably on the pillow, and the moaning had ceased. Such a blessing that the pain was stilled at last! The medicine had done its work quickly, and sleep had come to put an end to torture.

Yea, it must be all right, he was so quiet. In fact, a solemn stillness seemed to have come over everything. Not a sound was to be heard in that quiet room, and even the wind outside had ceased to bluster.

The silence was intense, and grew so deep, that Eric was almost afraid to break it with a breath. Cold drops gathered on his forehead,

his teeth chattered; a feeling grew on him that if this state of tension lasted much longer he would go raving mad.

Afraid to know—yet unable to remain in doubt—he caught up the lamp, and pulling aside the curtain held it over Sir Peter's face.

One scared look was sufficient. The cheeks had become more hollow, the chin had dropped, the eyes were opened with a sightless stare, and the greyness of death was on it all.

"Oh, Heaven forgive me!" broke from Eric's trembling lips, as the whole extent of his misery burst upon him.

Stamped with the brand of Cain for ever on his brow, he turned from the bed, and fell with the lamp in his hand face downwards on the floor. There Cyril found him when he came in a minute later, too anxious about his grandfather to wait till the hour that Eric had suggested.

He nearly tumbled over him, for the lamp had, fortunately, been extinguished in the fall, and the flame of his candle gave an uncertain light. Then he glanced towards the bed, and as he saw that the end had come, he said to himself with tears rushing to his eyes,—

"Poor Eric, the shock has been too much for him. He must have loved him after all!"

The news of Sir Peter's death spread through the house; red-eyed servants, dressed in haste, stood in groups about the passages, and Mrs. Seddon took Brenda in her motherly arms, and comforted her in her first grief.

They all agreed that there was nothing tragic in it, only a tired old man gone to his rest in the fulness of years; but it was hard to think they would never see his face again. No one saw behind the sorrow the stealthy shadow of crime!

(To be continued.)

MY LADY OF THE LAKE.

—:-

CHAPTER XXV.—(continued.)

"I KNOW of no reason why Rangor should have been pleased," Guy said, inadvertently, "unless he has changed his mind, and desires to have the first look at your pretty daughter himself; but if so, I have forestalled him, for I had the pleasure of meeting Miss Dalkeith in your absence."

"So I heard," remarked the Baronet, "but you need not hope to see her again, if any such idea has attracted you to the neighbourhood. I do not permit my daughter to see any strangers!"

It was all the artist could do not to laugh outright to hear anyone speak in such language to him concerning his wife.

He had really done his best to get into the Baronet's favour, and to make a good impression upon him; but now he began to think that May was right, and that there was no soft place to tackle in this human porcupine, and the strong fortress of the adamantine father would be obliged to be carried after all by a *coup de main*.

However, he resolved to try fair means once more, with a new tack before the wind of circumstances.

"I hope you will extend your friendship to me," he said, softly and politely, "for I have greatly desired to know more of you and of your daughter. She is a very charming girl, and you must acknowledge it is not unnatural that I should have been attracted by her artless beauty. I thought, perhaps, you would permit me to paint you a picture of her. She is fit to compete with any of the London beauties upon the walls of the Academy, and I do hope that you will let me—"

But Mr. Forrester got no farther.

May had said that Sir Roger did not show his wrath; but she had never seen him in such anger as he now displayed. He walked straight up to Guy Forrester, and caught him by the shoulders as he sprang to his feet, as much out

of temper as the Baronet himself, and hurled him towards the door, to which he pointed sternly.

"Go!" he said, in a voice of concentrated rage. "How dare you, a pettifogging artist, venture to mention the name of my daughter!"

Guy Forrester recovered his balance; but instead of going, as he had been ordered to do, he turned and looked fully and insolently in Sir Roger's face.

There was nothing for it but the "*coup de main*."

"I am not such a pettifogging artist as you seem to imagine, Sir Roger Dalkeith," he said, his words coming out clearly and distinctly, while his dark eyes gleamed with indignation. "You may not have heard my name at this out-of-the-way corner of the world; but had you moved in society you would have been aware that it is not an unknown one.

"Still, you can now judge for yourself of my merit as an artist if you will take the trouble to go up to your daughter's room, for she and I are not quite such strangers as you suppose. We met many times in your absence, and I had the pleasure of presenting her with a picture of her mother, Lady Dalkeith, which I painted from the description I received of that amiable and charming lady from our mutual friend Rangor. Lord Rangor, I think you prefer to have him called, although he is scarcely so particular himself. He is fond of talking of her ladyship, for whom he has ever entertained a profound admiration. His vivid description of her, backed by a photograph in his possession, enabled me to make an altogether satisfactory picture, as I think you will acknowledge when you see it," ended the artist with coolness and nonchalance.

"All this is false!" replied the Baronet, in a low, agitated voice.

"Pardon me," retorted Guy, furiously, "and if you were anyone but May's father I would force the words down your throat. I never allow any man to doubt my veracity with impunity. Come, Sir Roger, you had better be civil. I wished to be friendly; and to save you all unnecessary trouble and inconvenience I desired that everything should be done naturally and pleasantly between us; but if you will make the fire splutter by pouring water over it, I cannot help it. Don't blame me if I prove disagreeable. I would have been civil enough if you had only allowed me to be so. As it is, there is but one thing open to us now—we must thoroughly understand one another."

"Go on!" said the Baronet, in a hard, sepulchral tone. "I am listening to you, Mr. Forrester!"

"Certainly, I have every intention of doing so now that I have begun," he answered. "It was my intention, Sir Roger, not to have worried you at all, and to have shielded you from any annoyance, to have little by little won your goodwill, and your consent to my addressing your daughter. But this you have rendered impossible by your lack of courtesy towards your landlord's friend, who might surely have anticipated a welcome from you. However, it is quite useless to speak of that now."

"Quite!" remarked the Baronet, dryly.

"Just so! And there is nothing left for me to do but to explain the state of the case. I conclude if I were a near relation you would acknowledge that blood is thicker than water; and you know that there are other relationships which prove as close ties as those of blood, sometimes by one's own choice, sometimes by that of others. I suppose you will not object to receive your daughter's husband, for instance?" and the dark eyes rested searching upon the Baronet's face.

"I certainly decline to discuss my domestic matters with a stranger!" retorted Sir Roger, growing actually white with suppressed rage, "more especially a young man out of my own position in life! Mr. Forrester, I must request that you will leave my house at once, or I shall be under the painful necessity of showing you that I am neither so old nor so weak as I look!"

"Pray do not over-exert yourself!" returned the artist, with a gleam of malicious triumph breaking over his face. "I should be sorry if May's father upset himself on my account! It might vex the dear girl; and there is something so undignified, and such bad form in any sort of domestic row. For, somehow, such things always do get wind; and I confess I should be sorry myself, especially for May's sake. So if you have really quite decided that you will not receive me I must ask you to desire my wife to get ready to accompany me! I am sorry the truth should come upon you with a shock; but Mrs. Guy Forrester can produce her 'marriage lines,' as the poor people say, if you desire to see them!"

"Your wife!" exclaimed Sir Roger, in a cold, awe-struck whisper. "Impossible! When—"

"We were married during your pleasant stay in Switzerland," returned the artist, insolently.

"My pleasant stay!" repeated the old man. "You can scarcely know what my errand there was!"

"Perhaps not!" rejoined the other, with a laugh. "But now, Sir Roger Dalkeith, I think we fully understand one another. What have you made up your mind to do? I am very fond of May, of course; but, as I have explained to her, we cannot live upon air. I am a poor man, and shall expect you to place her in her rightful position in society, and not to bring her down to my level, which you correctly informed me just now was inferior to your own. You will see the justice of my request, I am sure."

Sir Roger had grasped the back of the nearest chair for support, and was looking at the artist with real pain and distress visible in his white, set face.

"It cannot be true!" he said again, in that strange, hard whisper.

"Ask May," laughed Guy Forrester. "She will not deny it; and she has the proofs. Kindly inform me what you are willing to do for your daughter, and I shall then know what steps to take next."

The sorrow died slowly out from the Baronet's features, and the old hard look returned.

"I must have time," he said, slowly. "I see no reason at present for giving credit to your assertion."

"Very well," retorted Guy, coolly throwing himself into Sir Roger's own arm-chair, and taking up a newspaper; "I have no wish to hurry you. As long as I have time to get back to Great St. Ormo to dinner it will suit me very well," and in another moment he was apparently engrossed in the subject before him, while the Baronet stood regarding him with the utmost anger and disgust, yet fearing afraid to speak, for if what this man stated were really true, he knew that he was, to a certain extent, in his power, and the knowledge stirred up within him a feeling of rage, animosity, and actual hatred.

So with a tumult of indignation, with difficulty kept down in his heart, he slowly moved away, and left Guy Forrester alone in the room.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MAY'S CONFESSION.

SLOWLY Sir Roger Dalkeith ascended the staircase, and tapped at his daughter's door.

It was locked; but he bade her unfasten it in such very decided terms that she instinctively obeyed him at once, rising with tear-stained face to do so.

But when she admitted him he scarcely noticed her.

The sun was streaming into her window, and the picture of Lady Dalkeith was before him, bathed in a flood of golden light, the sweet, proud eyes looking straight into his own, the lips just parted as though she were about to speak to him.

His nature was a hard one, and he had

treated her with cruelty and injustice. But thus suddenly brought face to face with her, when he had so lately stood beside her open grave, was too much even for Sir Roger Dalkeith.

He remained quite still, gazing beyond his sad young daughter, his eyes riveted upon the speaking features of the wife he should see in life no more!

Yes! he admitted to himself, the perfection of Guy Forrester's powers as an artist, as he stood rooted to the spot, spell-bound once again by the beauty which had in his earlier life had the power to thaw his icy nature, although it had not succeeded in melting it altogether, nor in subduing the pride which had so long owned no other master, and bowed to no other will.

Still, as he now stood before the picture of the dead woman, representing her in the pride of her youth and beauty, the power of it seemed to be upon him once again.

She alone of her sex had ever called forth the softer feelings of his manhood. He had never even had a passing fancy for any other woman.

She had had sufficient influence to make him lay aside in a measure the selfish old bachelor ways which had so long held him bound.

He had loved her according to his light, and perhaps he was not altogether responsible for its feeble flame.

Never, perhaps, had he loved her better than he did at that moment, when realising to the full that she was past recall he felt the subtlety of her great beauty, and remembered that nothing he could do could by any possibility make up to her for the many years of sadness which he knew she must have suffered as an unacknowledged wife and a lonely mother.

He was but too well aware what such facts must be to her proud nature, which could so ill brook unkindness or being misjudged.

At that moment he would have given all his hoarded wealth to be able to obliterate the past twenty years of his life, and to begin again with his wedding-day.

The little world around him thought that Sir Roger had not suffered during these years of separation, but he had done so; not in a way to soften him, far from it, for he had nursed his resentment; still he had undoubtedly suffered.

His daughter, when she opened her door in obedience to his command, had been thinking only of herself and her husband, and how different their joint life would be to what she had hoped and dreamed; but when she saw her father's eyes fixed upon the beautiful face in a flood of nature's glory, it was her husband who was forgotten, and the mother whom she had so often longed for, who was remembered.

She watched her father's face soften, and, after a while, she crept to his side and placed both her arms about his neck. He, too, had forgotten all else but the wife he had once loved, and yet had treated so ill.

He had forgotten the impudent artist lounging in his easy chair below—forgotten May's wrong doings, and for the moment he forgot to repulse her.

"Father!" she whispered, "I have so missed her, I have so longed for her, and do so still. Oh, papa! let her come home, please, please do!"

"She has gone home, child," he returned, in a husky whisper. "It is too late now—too late. May, your mother is dead! We cannot get her back now, however much we may wish it. But had she lived, perhaps she would not have come. Your mother was as proud as she was beautiful."

"Did you ever ask her, father?" inquired May, with feeling.

"Never," he replied, as he turned and looked at May, her great blue eyes raised to his full of tears. "Great heavens! girl, how like you are to her! only your mother never cried. She was too proud to show weakness. Tears were a feminine weapon to which I never knew her resort."

But his daughter had no such power of will; the grief crystals dropped heavily from the overcharged eyes, fed from the overcharged heart.

"Oh! father," she mourned, "and I shall never, never see her again, and I needed her love so much."

The memory of Guy Forrester came suddenly to the Baronet's mind as by a shock of electricity, and he resolutely turned his back to the picture which had so carried him out of himself, and so strongly affected him; and as resolutely he disengaged his daughter's clinging arms from his neck.

"Who painted that picture?" he inquired, sternly.

The already pale face of poor May turned paler still after a slight flush had flickered over it, caused by a rush of nervous excitement through her agitated system.

Still Lady Dalkeith's daughter was no coward. She could not be so with her mother's blood in her veins, and she did not flinch before her father one iota.

"It was a present to me from Mr. Forrester," she said, bravely. "He had heard of my mother from Lord Rangor, who, he told me, knew her, and who put him in possession of the data from which to paint the picture. I need not ask you if the likeness is a good one? I see by your face that it is; and, oh! father, how lovely she was!"

"Yes! your mother was a beautiful woman, May," he answered, dreamily; "and the portrait is lifelike. That is just what she was when I first knew her. I am glad you have told me the truth as to who painted it; but, May, I should have thought you would have had too much proper pride, brought up as you have been, to accept any present whatever from one of whose acquaintance your father had not approved. I expected you, brought up in seclusion here, to have been better than other girls, and not worse. There are few girls in society who would accept a valuable gift like that from a strolling artist of whom they know nothing whatever. I must confess, I am very much surprised at you—very."

The poor girl's lips quivered. Her womanhood whispered to her that there was truth and justice in his words; and the hot blood mounted to her face, and dyed it rosy red.

"Oh! papa, forgive me if I have done wrong," she murmured; "but, indeed, I have been very, very lonely sometimes. And when Mr. Forrester came down here to sketch I became so greatly interested in him, and we got to be friends; and, dear father, when he brought me the picture I thought it was so good of him to have done it—so very good, and it was of my mother, too. I wanted it so much I couldn't refuse it; indeed, I never even thought of doing so; and I am quite delighted with it. I seem to know my mother now as I never did before, and to be able to take my troubles to her, and she appears to look back at me with love and sympathy. Oh! father, you tell me that she is dead, and it has been the dream of my life to seek her out and find her, and throw myself upon her love. Forgive me, father, but I had even dreamed that I might bring you two together again."

Sir Roger Dalkeith turned abruptly to the window, and stood looking out over the lake.

He took no notice whatever of his daughter's words, and his face was hidden from her view. Nor would she have learnt much from it had she been able to see it, for it was seldom that he lost the command over his features.

After a few moments he moved again, and looked at May very gravely.

"And pray may I ask what return you made to this artist for his delicate attention?" he inquired, unpleasantly. "It is to be hoped you have not been so indiscreet as to invite him to my house in my absence?"

"No, father, he has never entered your doors, although I must confess the truth, he has been in the garden."

"How often?"

"Oh, I cannot say; but we have met many times there and by the lake."

"Anywhere else?" inquired her father, relentlessly, with his keen eyes fixed upon her as though he would read her inmost thoughts.

"Yes," she faltered, her face crimson with shame.

It had seemed so little to go away and marry the man she loved, and who she thought loved her so dearly, when she believed in the purity of their union, even without her father's consent.

But now, remembering that she had been married for her money, the whole tone of the proceeding seemed to be changed to her. She no longer looked through rose-coloured spectacles, but saw the affair more as others must see it, and she did not particularly like the look of her own act.

She began to think that one reason why Guy cared so little for her might be the easy way in which he had won her.

"Oh! you did meet him elsewhere," said Sir Roger, sternly. "May, I am perfectly ashamed of you! I should have thought you had more maidenly modesty!"

"Oh, spare me!" she pleaded. "I see I was wrong—very wrong. But, father, I loved Guy with all my heart! He came into my lonely life like summer sunshine. I could not send him away, his presence made me so happy! And, father, dear father, I believed as sincerely in his love for me!"

"Believe!" replied Sir Roger, sharply, catching at her words. "What am I to understand from that, pray? Has he changed, or has your opinion of him done so?"

Paler and paler grew Mrs. Guy Forrester. Untruth and hypocrisy were impossible to her; yet she was far from willing to let her father know the real state of the case, or what a bitter disappointment her husband had been to her.

"I would rather not reply to such a question as that," she faltered, with a sad smile. "You can ask Guy whether he loves me or no, father. He will answer you, I have no doubt."

"He shall answer me!" replied Sir Roger, sternly. "I confess I have no belief in a man who has behaved as he has done, taking advantage of my absence to mislead my child May, where have you been with this man? I insist upon your telling me! Were you with him the day I returned and found you absent, and where?"

"Yes, father. Has not Guy told you? I met him in Southmore, and oh! do pray forgive me, father! It is better that you should know the truth. I cannot deceive you any longer, and I have only been silent so far in deference to Guy's wishes. I loved Guy, I believed in him, and I consented to marry him without your knowledge. He said you would forgive us when you found that the thing was irrevocable; and, oh, papa! will you, will you?" and May sank down upon the ground at Sir Roger's feet, praying for his forgiveness.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHERE WAS SHE TO FIND LOVE—THAT LOVE FOR WHICH HER SOUL WAS CRAVING SO WILDLY?

Sir Roger Dalkeith stood looking down upon his daughter kneeling at his feet with pleading eyes and hands.

"Oh! father! forgive me!" she moaned, "for I am already punished, believe me. My own conscience tells me that I have neither acted wisely nor well; but I cannot now recall what I have done. I must abide by it, and I shall be very grateful to you if you will try to make Guy happy. He is most anxious to get on in his profession, untrammelled by the need to maintain himself. Do help him, father. It is all that I ask—that, and your forgiveness to me!"

"I do not understand you!" he said, gazing down upon the sweet, sad young face. "But get up, child! The ground is no place for you. Your mother's daughter should plead like that

to no man—not even her father!" and he raised her as he spoke.

"Am I to understand that you are already tired of your new plaything? What wonder if it be so! You are but a baby in years, although you have attained to a woman's stature. May, I cannot tell you what I feel about this insane marriage. I never meant you to see any man while I live. There would still have been time enough for you to choose a mate, if you really desired to do so, and you would have been old enough then to know your own mind. This is just what I have dreaded—that you would fall a prey to the villainy of some adventurer. But this scoundrel shall not benefit more than I can help by his rascality. Had I believed that he really loved you I might act differently; but that can be soon proved. Still, child, I never thought that you would thus have planned and plotted to obtain my money!"

"Oh, father!" she answered in real anguish. "Indeed, indeed, I do not want any of it. I do not love money at all. I should be content to be ever so poor if only Guy would be so."

"But Guy, as you call him, would not be. He has already told me that he has given you his views upon that subject."

"Did he indeed do so?" she asked, the pain deepening in her blue eyes. "Oh! father! I am so grieved; but what can I do now? It is too late to go back. I cannot release him, even if I prove to be penniless, although I would far rather do so than be a burthen to him, believe me. But, father, I honestly imagined that Guy wanted me, and me only, when he asked me to become his wife at once, lest anything should come between us; and even now I find it difficult to believe that such is not the case. He has spoken very strangely, I confess; but it is almost impossible that his great love could have been feigned, for you cannot picture what we were to each other!"

"No, I certainly cannot. I am not imaginative!" returned Sir Roger, dryly; "and I cannot picture any such intimacy as you speak of existing between any two people who have never even been properly introduced to each other, more especially when the lady in the case happens to be a Dalkeith! Our family have not hitherto made themselves so cheap; and I am at a loss to understand it. Moreover, from any other lips but your own, May, I would not have believed it."

The poor girl grew crimson; but now that her eyes were open, she knew that Sir Roger was right, and that her conduct had neither been wise nor seemly. The loss of Guy's love had taught her this lesson.

She bowed her head before her father's reproachful eyes, and answered meekly.

"I deserve your censure," while the heavy tears rolled down her thick, long lashes.

Her meekness touched him more than any defence of her conduct would have done, and he stretched out his hand to her.

"What is done cannot be undone, child. You must now leave me to settle with Mr. Forrester. We cannot prevent what has already taken place, but we may be able to stop talk and scandal; and if this be possible, I will do so. Are you content to leave the matter in my hands, having unfortunately found that you have not managed your own affairs satisfactorily?"

"Yes, father, I will leave it to you and Guy," she answered, sadly enough; "and, believe me, I am very sorry to have occasioned so much worry and trouble. Guy was so hopeful that you would like him and not mind, that all the difficulties seemed to vanish before his words; but I see now I was wrong."

"You were decidedly wrong. I do not like him at all. He is precisely the style of man I abhor—conceited, self-assertive, presumptuous; and I have not minded anything so much for many, many years," he ended, bitterly.

"Oh! papa, not my mother's death?" she

exclaimed, her voice and eyes filled with reproach.

"May," replied the Baronet, very sternly, "I cannot allow even you to talk to me of my wife; and in answer to your question I can only reply *not even that*, for she has been dead to me ever since she and I became two!"

"Dear father, do not say that," pleaded May, "for Guy says that Lord Rangor tells him she was such a sweet woman, and that she loved you devotedly."

"Hush!" he returned, not without feeling. "I, too, thought once; but, no, it could not be. I was mistaken. Had she loved me, she would have bowed to my opinions. Do not let us renew this subject. And now good-bye, child. Stay in your room to-day. It is my wish, and I will do what I can to remedy, as far as possible, the mischief you have done. By-the-by, what part have my servants had in this affair?"

"None—none whatever, except trying to protect me from worse harm. When the night before my wedding I told Mrs. Wheeler what I was going to do the next day, she said nothing; but in the morning she was ready to accompany me, and I am most grateful to her for doing so," said May, fervently.

Sir Roger grunted, and, turning away, passed out at the door, leaving his daughter looking at his retreating figure with a sad and stricken face, while heart-sickness ever deepened upon her.

Where was she to find love—that love for which her soul was craving so wildly? That was the question which came to her as she found herself once more left alone.

She had long known that it was not in her father she could find this kindred spirit, and yet in her longing and bitter disappointment concerning Guy she had turned to him with clinging arms, hoping against hope for such sympathy as it really was not in his power to give.

She had believed that she had found this perfect love and unity of spirit in the man she had married until his own cruel words had driven away the delusion, and shown him to her as what he really was—a cool, calculating man of the world, and an adventurer.

In her innocence of evil she felt unable to grasp the true meaning of his conduct. She could not comprehend a man who would love her in affluence, but who could not care for her, and live with her in poverty.

Love to her was love, and a thing not to be affected by outward circumstances. And the fountain of her affection, which she had so lavishly shed upon Guy Forrester, dried in its flow, going back to her young heart with a painful pleasure, as she stood with her hands tightly locked together, looking out over the lake in appearance, but with her mind concentrated upon the picture which she had conjured up. It was her ideal man—a being the soul of honour, chivalrous to women, gentle to children, kind to all, but loving only one—the woman who loved and trusted him beyond all else in the world, the sharer of his joys and sorrows, the dear life companion whom God had given him. All this she had believed Guy Forrester to be, coming, as he did, to her like sunshine on a dark winter day—handsome, acting love and courtesy so divinely, giving out his strange, sweet fancies with such apparent truth. But now she knew it had not been truth, but absolute mockery and humbug—a farce, a domestic drama, with an impostor for its hero.

Yes! she knew it all now. She could see it just as though she were studying the life and sorrows of some one else. Her ideal was the same. Her great love was the same. But she had been cheated and deceived, and had no longer any one upon whom to bestow it.

The fountain of her affection must indeed return to the source from which it sprang. If Guy Forrester thought that a kind word would obtain him his forgiveness for his treachery, he did not know the nature of Sir Roger Dalkeith's daughter. That treachery never would and never could be forgotten or forgiven.

May felt that her husband though he was, she could in no way defend him, nor excuse his unwarrantable and unmanly conduct towards herself. She felt bitterly that he had sinned altogether against the strongest sentiments of her womanhood and her pride, and she knew that however much she might have to spend her life by his side, since her duty lay in doing so, she could never again really love the man who had thus wronged and deceived her, and that the happiness of her existence had been completely wrecked.

It was certainly not a happy or pleasant reflection for a young wife, more especially one of such tender years as May, who had yet to learn how to smile with an aching heart—a lesson which, alas! many women have to become perfect in.

Sir Roger Dalkeith, when he left May, went straight to the housekeeper's room, the door of which he opened without knocking, and stood regarding Mrs. Wheeler with stern eyes.

The good woman was polishing a tray full of glass with a leather, and when she saw her master's face the tumbler she held in her hand, fell with a crash, and was smashed to atoms on the floor.

"Oh, dearie me, I am sorry!" she cried apologetically. "It is one of the very best glasses. But you must excuse me, sir, for you really did startle me and give me a turn!"

"Never mind the glass!" he said, coldly. "I have a far more serious matter to discuss with you, Mrs. Wheeler! Why did you not let me know of this insane intimacy going on between my daughter and this artist fellow? There I do not deny your knowledge of the affair! You must have been aware of what was going on, and you must have been idiotic to have allowed it!"

"No, Sir Roger," she replied, trying to be brave. "I am not going to deny anything. I confess I did see that the young people were very good friends; but then, I was a happy wife once myself, you know," she continued, tears welling up in her eyes, "and of course it all began by making friends, and it seemed natural enough to me that they should be happy together. And, besides, Sir Roger, you must be aware that you left no address behind when you went away from home, and that I had no power whatever to communicate with you; nor could I have in any way influenced Miss May. Any one could see that she had decided for herself, and if the gentleman only proves a goodman and a kind husband, she will never regret it.

"When I found that they really were going to be married, I did what I considered to be my duty. I went with her to make sure that there was no mistake about it. There's a deal of wickedness in the world, and how could I tell that it was all above board? I have heard of gentlemen going through sham marriages with girls. But it was all 'bony fid.' There was no mistake about that. The marriage took place at St. Clement's Church, at Fleet-street; and the clergyman, a young man with a yellow moustache, performed the service. Miss May is married all right. It was quite legal; and when we lost the early train home, we dined at the Railway Hotel, and I took every care of Miss May, sir, I did, indeed. In fact, I never lost sight of her once during the day!

"Poor lamb! She only wanted the ceremony performed, so as you shouldn't try and send her sweetheart away. And now it is done, air, won't it be wise to make the best of it?"

"Mrs. Wheeler!" retorted the Baronet, sternly, "I do not require your opinion or advice. I shall never consider that you have behaved weakly and foolishly, and that you ought to have done something to prevent that young man coming here; and your folly has cost my daughter dearly. However, since you know her secret, there is only one thing to be done—to bind you down to keep it!"

"Oh! I promise that faithfully!" she cried, eagerly. "The rack shouldn't make me speak, unless Miss May desires it."

"She will not desire it. Does any one else

know of this marriage, which you assure me was so 'bond side,' and yet my daughter was married without my consent, when as you are well are, she is a minor. Pray who attested to her being of age?"

Mrs. Wheeler looked decidedly frightened. "I don't understand lawyer's ways, sir; but it seemed to me just the same as when I was married myself, only I had a common license, and Miss May had a special one, as befitting her station. As to your question, sir, no one has heard of the marriage from me, and never will."

"Not even Thomas?" and the Baronet regarded her keenly.

"No, sir, not even Thomas; though, of course, he has seen them walking about together and that, and feels a little uneasy, because, as he said, 'artists didn't always bear a good name.' But there! as I told him, sir, there are good and bad in all professions, and so there are!"

"Very well!" returned the Baronet coldly and slowly. "And you are sure you never left my daughter on the day of her marriage?"

"Never, till I left her with you, sir!" she rejoined, decidedly.

"Then be silent, or remember that it will be the worse for you!"

And having launched that shaft, which might mean so much or so little, at his agitated housekeeper, the Baronet walked with a firm step back to his study.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"I ACKNOWLEDGE NO SON-IN-LAW!" SAID SIR ROGER DALKEITH, COLDLY.

GUY FORRESTER was apparently absorbed in the news of the day when his father-in-law re-entered, and continued to read on until he had finished the paragraph he was perusing, much to that gentleman's indignation.

He took the second easy chair, and, sitting down, regarded him as though he were a new species of animal he had never seen before.

This scrutiny was decidedly not pleasant to the artist, but he determined to carry on the affair with a high hand.

"Well, Sir Roger," he said, lightly, "have you seen the picture? And are you now able to acknowledge my merit as an artist?"

"Yes!" he answered, coldly, "I have seen it, and it does you credit."

"Come! we're getting on. That sounds cheerful," laughed Guy, "for from all I have heard, compliments do not fall readily from the lips of Sir Roger Dalkeith; therefore I feel myself especially flattered."

"You have heard rightly," replied the other, dryly, and for a moment silence reigned.

Then Guy, the irrepressible, looked at the Baronet with an interrogatory smile, and questioning words.

"Well," he said, quite cheerfully, "have you decided how things are to be settled between us?"

"Certainly I have done so!"

"Then perhaps you will kindly communicate your sentiments to your affectionate son-in-law," said the artist, sitting up and leaning eagerly towards him.

"I do not go in for sentiments, Mr. Forrester. I leave them for foolish girls like my daughter. You would find difficulty in playing upon my feelings or credulity, as you have done on hers, and I acknowledge no son-in-law!"

"Come now, my dear fellow! that won't wash," retorted Guy, with easy familiarity. "I am your son-in-law as much as though you had given your full and free consent, and attended the wedding into the bargain. Your daughter is my wife! nothing can controvert that. It only rests with you whether she is to take her rightful place in the world as your daughter, and to live a happy life, which shall redound to the credit of her father; or whether she is to know the pinch of poverty in a couple of rooms in an unfashionable locality."

"I cannot do more for her myself, unaided,

for my name is yet young in the world of art, and my expenses are already greater than my receipts. I confess I should not be glad to be obliged to add to them. Some wag or another, my memory does not register who, said that marriage was one man's insane desire to maintain another man's daughter. Now I do not look at it in that light at all. I consider if a fellow is not well off he should look for a wife with money to assist him."

"It is a pity you did not carry your elevated ideas into effect," replied Sir Roger, scornfully, "as my daughter has not a penny of her own!"

"If she had, my dear sir, it would not go far towards housekeeping; but she has the good fortune to have had a father born before her."

"She has, and that father will shield her from such heartless, impudent adventurers as yourself, Mr. Forrester. You wish to know what I have decided, and I have no desire whatever to withhold my decision from you. I give you your choice of two things, and as you choose so I shall act.

"You cannot have your wife and money too. If you love her well enough to endure that poverty which you have described with her, I will order her to pack her boxes at once, and go with you; but be good enough to understand that if once she leaves my roof it will be for ever! and I shall most certainly never receive her again. Moreover, she will not have from me one 'son' during my lifetime, nor will she inherit anything whatever at my death. Since May has thus displeased me, and made such a despicable union, none of my wealth—and I can assure you that it is vast—shall ever pass into her hands, least the scoundrel who has so cruelly misled and deceived her, should suck advantage out of it.

"Such a man would be sure to turn up so soon as I was cold, and claim with fervour the unfortunate wife whom he had neglected in her poverty. I know the sort of reptile that glides into the fair Eden of a young girl's innocent heart, and withers all the bright flowers of her existence with his baseness!" ended Sir Roger, with utter contempt and scorn.

"Now, Mr. Forrester, do you admire the picture? Do you like the prospect? If so, pray do not let me in any way stand in the light of your happiness. It will be my daughter's duty to follow the pauper she has chosen for her husband into the life of obscurity he has provided for her. There will be nothing left for me to do but to bid her farewell for ever; for I should never be induced to see her again under any circumstances whatever. The breach once made will be irrevocable!"

And as Sir Roger pronounced these fatal words, extinguishing all hope from the mind of even sanguine Guy Forrester, he looked as hard and as immovable as the pyramids of Egypt, or the cold, smooth surface of the cliffs of white marble in India—so immovable, that Guy Forrester paled visibly, and his courage cooled.

He had expected a storm; but he had not anticipated this icy blast, which seemed to freeze up his brightest hopes and visions. A porcupine was a very harmless animal when compared to Sir Roger Dalkeith!

May had told him he did not know what her father was like. She certainly was right. He had never dreamed of such an unthawable iceberg as the Baronet.

Guy Forrester had always considered himself a very charming, irresistible sort of fellow indeed.

"*Veni, vidi, vici,*" was his mental proverb in thinking of himself, even though he did not put the thoughts into words for the benefit of others.

Perhaps it was in some measure the fault of the fair sex, but this undoubtedly was the artist's opinion of himself; and it was a crushing blow to him to find that he could make no impression whatever upon his wife's father.

His very lips were white and stiff as he

framed them to make an answer. He felt like a gambler whose *all* is at stake, and knows that the next throw of the dice must prove his ruin or the reverse.

"And what is your other proposition?" he asked, in a low, uneasy voice, his large dark eyes, looking larger and darker than ever, filled with the fitful, strange light reflected by the strong hopes and fears which crowded into his mind.

He had played for a very heavy stake, and the next few minutes would prove whether he had ruined himself or no.

A hard, mocking smile played upon the Baronet's mouth, as when the sun suddenly glints out from the heavy, leaden sky of mid-winter upon the cold, ice-bound world, and reflecting no sunshine or warmth, disappears again into the darkness.

"Oh! I wish to hear my *other* proposition, do you? Surely the one I have already mentioned should be enough for a swain so devoted as to entice a child of sixteen into a stolen courtship and a hidden marriage. So ardent a lover will brook no further delay, surely! You have married your wife; by all means take her!" said the Baronet, in tones of scornful contempt and cynicism.

Guy Forrester was goaded almost to madness. His features worked, and his eyes gleamed fiercely, while he gnawed savagely at his autumn-tinted, gold-brown moustache.

He looked like a dog who longed to bite, but was actually so afraid of the consequences as to pause before doing so.

"I have already told you that I could not be contented to live the life of a poor man. I certainly expected to better my prospects by marriage, not to ruin them," he answered, with ill-suppressed anger. "I have not hidden my feelings in this matter from my wife."

"Did you make her acquainted with them before or after marriage, may I ask?" inquired Sir Roger, with a sneer.

"It is impossible to reply to such questions," retorted the artist: "nor can I see any sense in our bandying words. You mentioned an alternative, and I wish to hear it."

"Yes, I mentioned an alternative, and you shall hear it; but first, Mr. Forrester, let me inform you that you are totally and entirely in my power, and do not imagine that anything which I may say or offer is a sign of weakness on my part, but merely because I prefer to throw a bone to a starving dog than to hear it howl around my house."

"And I am the starving dog?" asked Guy, indignantly.

"Yes! you are the starving dog," continued the Baronet, in the same quiet, almost monotonous tone.

"I am highly flattered!" struck in Guy, angrily; but the cold voice of the Baronet went on as though he had never spoken.

"I might flog the rascally cur for his presumption and impudence in trespassing upon my grounds, but that would probably only make him yelp the louder, and attract passers-by to see what was going on. Still, the dog should understand that I have the right to flog him, and a heavy whip in my hand wherewith to do it."

"Really, Sir Roger," exclaimed Guy, impatiently, "I am not a child to have Old Mother Hubbard stories told to me; nor are these the old biblical days when things were revealed to men in parables. The nineteenth century is surely sufficiently advanced in civilization for men and women to talk sense."

"Indeed!" replied the Baronet, drily. "Then I am afraid Mr. Guy Forrester will be able to enter into very little conversation."

Mr. Guy Forrester felt the nasty jar all through his frame, but every moment he began more fully to realize the fact that the man he had thought to manage with such ease was more than a match for him; and he thought that discretion was the better part of valour, so he wisely held his tongue, although words of rebellion and insolence were *au bout des lèvres*, as the French have it.

"Since you object to metaphor, Mr. Forrester," continued Sir Roger Dalkeith, "I will speak plainly. In marrying my daughter without my consent, at her tender age, you could not have obtained a license without *perjuring yourself!* And for this act of perjury you have rendered yourself amenable to the law. If I do not have you punished as you deserve, it is for my daughter's sake solely, and not for yours. I have no wish that her name should be brought prominently before the public, even though you consider her so fit a subject for the walls of the Academy."

"I have no desire that my daughter should sit as a painter's model, nor pose for the benefit of the numerous journalists who would be ready to reproduce her conduct in black and white, praising or blaming her actions as seems to them best. The press is a very powerful organ, undoubtedly, but one which I should be very sorry to expose anyone to, who bears, or has borne my name."

"For the rest, Mr. Guy Forrester, if I choose to set it aside, your marriage with my child is not worth *that!*" and Sir Roger leaned forward and snapped his fingers so sharply close to the nose of the artist as to be positively unpleasant. "May be your wife in name, but she is nothing more; and if you feel the least inclined to take the matter into court, *pray do so;* and I will meet you there."

(To be continued.)

A TOOTHSOME STORY OF VIARDOT.

MME. PAULINE VIARDOT, the ever-to-be-remembered "Fides" in Meyerbeer's *Prophète*, had one of her upper teeth longer than the rest of her pearly jewels, which somewhat damaged the beautiful expression of her physiognomy.

A few evenings before the production of the *Prophète*, during one of the general rehearsals of that opera, Meyerbeer went into her room and advised her that he could not consent to let her sing "Fides."

"How so?" exclaimed the great artiste, stupefied at such a dreadful revelation. "Am I wrong in the interpretation of any part of the rôle? If so, you should tell me, sir, and I will endeavour to correct myself."

"Madame, you are a perfect 'Fides,' and I could not dream of any tragedian songstress to sing and play better than you," answered the maestro; "but—but—you cannot perform 'Fides,' unless—"

"Unless what?" quickly asked Pauline Viardot, bursting into tears.

"Unless you submit to a painful surgical operation, madame, and I think you won't," replied Meyerbeer.

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Simply this, you must have that overgrown tooth sawed to the level of the others."

"Oh, sir, it must be horrible!"

"Not at all, madame. I have just ordered the Queen of Prussia's dentist to come to Paris for the express purpose of attending your operatic majesty, and you may rely upon his unsurpassed skill."

As it was the *sine qua non* condition imposed by the hard-to-please maestro, Pauline Viardot made up her mind to confide her beautiful head to the dentist, who first chloroformed her, and with a magic dexterity removed the obnoxious bit of ivory.

A few nights after that terrible trial Pauline Viardot won her crown of immortality in the "Fides," in which she will never be equalled. When the tremendous echoes of the enthusiastic applause had abated, and the artistes were allowed to leave the stage, Giacomo Meyerbeer, trembling like a child with emotion, respectfully took the right wrist of "Fides," to which he adjusted a diamond bracelet worth thirty thousand francs (twelve hundred pounds), in the middle of which, and surrounded by rubies, stood the small piece of tooth that for so many years had been prominent in the features of the great artiste.

GERDA'S SACRIFICE.

—o:—

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Duchess advanced to meet Lady Castleton with outstretched hand. Little as she liked Rosamond, she could not forget she was the wife of one whom she looked on almost as a son.

She had honestly tried to like Reginald's bride, and though she had failed, and privately felt her favourite had thrown himself away, yet she was careful to show all possible attention to Rosamond, so that no one should guess how little they had in common.

The Countess was dressed in the extreme of fashion, her French costume perfectly dazzling in its many tints. The Duchess thought her companion's perfectly-fitting black cashmere in infinitely better taste.

"Let me introduce you to a dear little friend of mine, Lady Castleton," she said, drawing Irene forward. "This is my adopted daughter, Miss March."

"Really," said Rosamond, carelessly. "It is a very sudden adoption, is it not, Duchess?" Her Grace felt annoyed.

"Not more so than Lord Castleton's marriage," she said, coolly.

Rosamond never blushed at the allusion. Instead, she turned the subject to Castleton, and asked the Duchess whether she had ever seen the grand old place one day to be her own.

"Often. In fact, at one time I spent each autumn there. It is a lovely place!"

"Rex never will talk about it; he seems to have made up his mind it will never be ours."

"He can hardly hope that it ever should."

The Countess stared.

"He ought to hope it."

"Hardly. Since, if Castleton is yours, Lady Gerda is proved to have taken her own life."

"The most sensible thing she could do!"

The Duchess would have liked to annihilate the speaker. She never had a kindly thought for the beautiful young Countess after those cruel words.

"I fail to see your meaning, Lady Castleton. I have been taught to consider suicide a sin."

"In the abstract yes. But in this case it would have been an act of wisdom. What could an ignorant, half-educated girl do with such an inheritance?"

"Are you sure she was half-educated?"

"No. But—"

"At least," said the Duchess, with chilling clearness, "she would be a lady by birth. Nothing in the world could rob her of that."

The Countess felt dimly that she was getting the worst of it, and hastened to change the subject.

"I suppose Miss March will be presented? I hear there is to be another drawing-room soon."

"Certainly. I shall present Irene at the next opportunity. I expect much pleasure from seeing her success."

Miss March blushed.

"My dear Duchess," she said, gently, "society has no charms for me. I would far rather stay at home."

"I must have my own way," said the Duchess. "You know you are my daughter now, and I have a right to dispose of you."

"So many people claim that," said Irene, brightly. "Why, Mr. Bradley always said he looked on me as a younger sister!"

The Duchess smiled.

"I think you are a sister any man would be proud to own. Don't you agree with me, Lady Castleton?"

"Yes," returned Rosamond, who seemed strangely excited, for a bright red spot burned in either cheek. "By the way, Miss March, i once knew a Mr. Bradley. Could it possibly be the gentleman who regards you as his b ster?"

"I don't know. He was very good!"
"I detest good people!"

Both the listeners seemed a little puzzled by this speech. Neither of them quite knew how to answer it.

"For your sake," said Rosamond, looking intently at Irene, "I hope our Mr. Bradleys are two different people. Mine died a month ago quite suddenly at Calais, under the saddest possible circumstances."

"How very strange!"

"Why?"

"My Mr. Bradley is at Calais. He has been terribly ill, but has just been pronounced out of danger. He is now going to travel in Italy for the benefit of his health."

"I wonder he doesn't want his adopted sister to preside over his wanderings."

"Oh, he has his little girl, and his aunt. Miss Morton and Blanche will be good company for him; better far than mine."

Lady Castleton rose to take leave.

The Duchess thought she had never seen her look so lovely. But there was something unnatural in her beauty. She was pale as death, only on each cheek shone one vivid crimson spot.

Her brougham was waiting for her. The footman closed the door, and inquired,—

"Where to, my lady?"

"The nearest post-office."

It was a strange order, but the man obeyed. Lady Castleton alighted at the post-office—a quiet and somewhat obscure one. She made her way to the telegraph department, and scribbled a message at the counter.

"Pauline Lecomte, 5, Arley-terrace, Park-lane, to the Head of the Police Department, Calais:—

"Is there anyone called Bradley in the town? He may be wanted on important business. Send description and Christian name. Reply paid."

It cost a pretty penny for that message and its answer. My lady was unusually thoughtful as she drove homewards; and Pauline thought, when she dressed her, she had never seen her take so little interest in her toilet.

"The white silk or the black lace, my lady?"

"The black lace."

"And what ornaments, my lady?"

"I don't care."

"Crimson flowers would look best, my lady; you are so pale to-night!"

"I don't mind."

"Shall I get you a cup of tea, my lady?" asked Pauline, when she had finished. "You look ready to faint!"

The Countess shook her head.

"I want nothing, Pauline. Stay a minute. I have something to say to you."

Pauline looked up questioningly.

"Lock the door."

Marvelling at the unusual order the girl obeyed; another moment, and she was back at her ladyship's side.

"Do you remember that morning in Paris, Pauline, when you saw Mr. Bradley?"

"Perfectly, my lady."

"I told you afterwards how he died."

"The very next day, my lady. You said he died suddenly at Calais. I think you showed me the letter you received."

"I have heard to-day that he is alive."

"But it would be impossible, my lady. Men don't die and come to life like that!"

"I have heard this afternoon that he is alive," repeated the Countess, in a strange far-off sort of voice. "It matters little to me, but I don't like mysteries, so I have written to inquire."

"Certainly, my lady; it was the most natural thing to do."

"I meant to write," said the Countess, slowly, "but then afterwards I thought it would be better to telegraph. I did so in your name."

Pauline contemplated the back of her ladyship's head. She did not want Lady Castleton to see the surprise painted on her face.

"The reply will come here directed to you. I want you to see that I have it at once—to take care that none of the servants suspect it is not for yourself."

"I will have a care, my lady," said Pauline, thoughtfully. "It is true that I have a brother in France who is very ill. I will just say to cook that I expect a telegram to tell me of his state."

The brother was invented for the occasion, as the Countess probably guessed, for she smiled, approvingly,—

"Certainly, Pauline," opening her purse.

"You may want to buy a few extra comforts for your brother while he is ill; I am very well satisfied with you. Take this, and spend it on anything you please."

Pauline pocketed the five-pound note with a smiling face, and my lady went to join her husband.

The girl was not naturally avaricious. She had been a simple, well-intentioned young woman when she first came to Rosamond. But she had a lover in a distant colony, and the ambition of her life was to help forward the time when he would be able to make a little home for her there.

She would never have robbed her employer, only Rosamond had let her see she possessed a secret, and that it was worth Pauline's while to help her keep it.

The money the maid had already received made her wish for more. She had no intention of betraying her mistress, only she guessed the more she could discover of her secret the more hush-money she would receive, and she acted up to this belief.

Left alone, she busied herself in putting away the pretty confusion of nick-nacks her mistress had left upon the dressing-table. Then she fell to thinking about the secret, and what it could be.

"Fine ladies generally have a lover," mused Pauline, "but the Countess has none, I am quite sure of that. She does not love the Earl as he does her, but she loves him as much as she could anyone. She is happy in his society, she likes his caresses. No, clearly my lady has not a lover."

Pauline looked round the room as though expecting to receive help from the familiar objects in it; but for a long time she looked in vain.

At last it came upon her like a flash of lightning that ever since she had lived with the Countess a small casket had stood upon the dressing-table, and she had never had an opportunity to inspect its contents.

It had gone to Paris, it had come back; it was now side by side with the handsome dressing-case.

Lady Castleton often looked at it as though to assure herself of its safety; but the maid had never seen it open—had never received the slightest hints of its contents.

"That is it!" said the girl to herself. "Whatever secret is hidden in my lady's life that box holds the clue. She wouldn't take it about with her wherever she goes, and yet never open it; she wouldn't let a shabby thing like that stand among all the beautiful ornaments on her dressing-table unless there was some good reason for it."

The box was shabby. Pauline was quite right. It was like an ugly blot upon the elegant trifles of Lady Castleton's toilet. Originally it had, perhaps, cost ten-and-sixpence—one of those cheap leather boxes sold in the Lowther Arcade and similar places, and used by young girls whose jewels amount to a few brooches, one or two bracelets, and a few rings as a trinket box.

Even in its pristine beauty it would have been unworthy a Countess. And now, why, the common leather was scratched and worn, the hinges were loose, and the corners were painfully bare!

When Pauline had first entered Lady Castleton's service she had naturally removed this box to a cupboard; but her mistress had instantly demanded it, and given her the most positive orders never to remove it again.

"I like it where I can see it!"

"It looked so shabby. I had no idea you could set such store by it, my lady!"

"It was given me by my mother when I was quite a child."

She waited now until she saw the carriage drive away. She knew that the Earl and Countess would not return before midnight at the earliest—more than three hours lay before her.

"I don't want any supper, cook!" Pauline said to the queen of the kitchen. "I have some lace to tack on my lady's morning-gown, and I shall do it up in her room."

Then, her absence explained, she hurried upstairs, turned the key in the door, and sat listlessly down to examine the box.

It was a very common lock—she saw that at a glance. It would be easy enough to burst it; but Pauline had a more ambitious plan. She wanted to open the box, examine the contents, and then replace them so that Lady Castleton might never suspect they had been tampered with.

She took a bunch of keys from a drawer in the dressing-table; but none of them fitted. She was almost in despair, when she caught sight of Lady Castleton's desk half open on a gipsy table. Raising the lid in a small compartment, she found a common rusty key tied with a blue ribbon.

Instinct told her she was right, and so it proved. Another moment, and the contents of the leather box were in her lap.

But at first Pauline could not make much of them. There was a lock of fair hair, not unlike Lady Castleton's own, the portrait of a handsome youth, whom, in spite of the change of years, Pauline recognised as the Mr. Bradley she had seen in Paris, a bundle of letters addressed to Mrs. Bradley, the certificate of the baptism of a Blanche Kathleen Bradley, and a tiny woollen boot, wrapped in tissue paper, and labelled "my darling's shoe!"

Pauline started. She would have known that writing anywhere for her lady's. Now she began to feel she was on the track, her suspicions were not quite right; but one thing she had discovered—Lady Castleton had had a lover. It remained to find out whether she had broken with him before she married the Earl.

Breathlessly the maid took up the last thing in the box—a photograph, such as is often done by wandering artists at the seaside—but Pauline could hardly confront herself as she looked at it. It represented a family group—father, mother, and child. So far there was nothing strange; but in the features of the happy, proud young mother, the astute maid at once recognised her beautiful mistress, Lady Castleton.

"It cannot be!" she muttered half aloud. "She could not run the risk. Why, it would be imprisonment!"

She opened one of the letters, which bore date only six weeks before her ladyship's marriage—a husband's passionate love-letter to his wife.

Very slowly and carefully she put back the letter and the other things, arranging them so deftly no one would have suspected they had been disturbed. Then she sat down and thought quietly.

"My fortune's made. No need to say anything now. I must bide my time, only whatever I ask my lady she must do, because she dare not refuse. I know all now, and I shall take care to use my knowledge when it will be useful."

The next day, sure enough, she received the telegram Lady Castleton had alluded to. Pauline had carefully spread the story of her brother's illness. She apologised to the Countess for opening the telegram, saying she thought it would seem so strange to the other servants if she did not, but, of course, she had not read a word; but, as a matter of fact, the whole message was stamped upon her brain.

Rosamond hardly seemed to hear her. She snatched the message from the girl, pointed to the door, locked it on Pauline, and was

alone while she deciphered the words that must decide her fate.

If Harry Bradley lived there was nothing before her but danger, suspicion, guilt and dishonour; if he was dead, the rest was easy. She almost hated the innocent girl she had seen yesterday, because her voice had been the one to suggest that Hal Bradley was still alive.

"But it can't be true," said Rosamond, passionately. "He must be dead. M. Adolphe is too skilful to fail; besides, that letter from Calais assured me of the fact."

Then with trembling fingers she unfolded the despatch.

"Harry Bradley almost recovered from his illness; left here yesterday for Italy, accompanied by his aunt and daughter."

Rosamond clasped her hands in mute despair. Harry was alive! Then what was she?

CHAPTER XIX.

The Duke of Monkton found time pass so pleasantly at the Priory that the Duchess and Irene had been domiciled together almost a month before his cab stopped at Ruthyn House.

His mother had not written to him because she expected his return daily, and she detested letter-writing.

Lady Lilian Carew, who returned to town fully ten days before the Duke made Miss March's acquaintance, at once fell in love with her at first sight. She even told Irene of the unflattering fancy portraits they had drawn of her, and declared she should not think of undecoying his Grace.

"But I should so like to be here when he is introduced to you," she added, brightly.

Irene flushed.

"I shall only be his mother's companion to the Duke of Monkton. I only hope he will not resent her kindness to me."

"He won't do that, dear. I expect you will be great friends."

Irene shook her head.

"Unequal friendships never answer."

"You are morbid," said Lilian, quickly. "I have a great mind to shake you. You have been presented at Court; the Duchess is preparing to go through the London season as energetically as though you were her own child. Everyone looks on you as her adopted daughter."

Meanwhile no hint of this reached the Duke; no voice warned him that his mother was literally infatuated with Miss March. He was still under the belief that lady was a companion of the ordinary type, when his cab stopped at Ruthyn House one afternoon towards the end of May.

"My mother in, Simmonds?"

"The Duchess is in the drawing-room, your Grace!"

There he found her with half-a-dozen callers. She greeted him affectionately, then resumed her conversation with some distinguished guest, and Bertram had leisure to look round.

To his surprise three of the callers were young men of the type, who, as a rule, don't make calls on elderly widows. The object of their attention was undeniably a slender girl, in a tight-fitting black dress, who seemed to have wandered into the house like some veritable sunbeam.

She was very pretty, and she seemed perfectly at home. It did not need the fact of her ungloved hands and her uncovered brown hair to tell the Duke that she must be staying at Ruthyn House.

"Only the mother never invites strangers. And I am quite sure I have never seen this girl before. Who on earth can she be?" he pondered.

The last callers left in due time. The brown-eyed girl quitted the room, the Duchess and her son were alone.

"You have grown quite a gay old lady! Why the room looked quite crowded when I came in."

"They don't come to see me!" returned his mother, smilingly. "Do you know, Bertram, Irene promises to be the belle of the season. Of course, she is not so lovely as Lady Castleton, nor so gay as Lilian; but then they are married, and—"

"Do you know, mother, you are talking in riddles. I haven't the least idea who Irene is?"

The Duchess drew herself up proudly.

"You were so long finding me a daughter, Bertie, that I grew tired of waiting, and found one myself."

"So long as it is a daughter for you and not a wife for me I am agreeable!"

"She is charming!"

"Who is?"

"My adopted daughter!" and then she stopped suddenly, for Irene entered.

The Duchess introduced them in due form, only she spoke of the girl as "my dear child, Irene!" and entirely ignored the name of March.

"Is it not wonderful how I found her?" asked the Duchess, triumphantly.

"My mother talks as if she had gone out into a field to look for mushrooms, and brought you home instead!" said the young man, mischievously. "Am I really to understand, mother, that you went out in search of a daughter, and dragged this young lady home captive?"

"How provoking you are, Bertram. She is the child—of—some one your brother wished to marry!"

"I can't look on you as a niece, Miss Irene!" said the Duke, gravely. "It would make me feel too old!"

Irene blushed, but left the answer to the Duchess.

"I always did think Florence Leslie clever, and now I have more confidence in her than ever!"

"Because she sent you, Miss March?"

"Precisely."

"And where is that young lady?"

Irene and the Duchess looked surprised.

"Bertram, I think your mind must be wandering," said his mother. "I have just introduced you to her."

The Duke opened his eyes.

"I am bewildered. I believe I thought there were two young ladies—Florence's protégée and another."

"Irene is only Irene."

Perhaps it was natural the girl should leave the room. Bertram turned to his mother.

"Who is she?"

"You were such a child at the time you would never remember. Have you never heard of a university coach whose daughter your brother wanted to marry?"

"Often. Not even the strawberry leaves tempted her, if I remember right."

"She was Irene's mother."

"And the father?"

"He was literary. Your little friend has every mark of blue blood. She reminds me of some little princess."

"And you won't mind having her here, Bertie?"

"Mind! My dear mother, I am delighted you have found such a source of interest."

"My companions were all failures," said the Duchess, gravely; "but this girl touched my heart at once."

"You are rich enough to afford two or three adopted daughters," said the Duke, pleasantly; "but I doubt, mother, if you will keep this one long!"

"Why not?"

"She is too pretty."

"I suppose she is. I know she took my fancy the first moment I saw her."

"And she will take some unlucky man's fancy and break his heart."

"Bertram, how dare you suggest such a thing! I assure you Irene is not a flirt."

"Possibly not," said the young man, gravely; "but if a man loves a woman and loses her it doesn't make the blow any easier to bear, mother, because he knows it is all his own fault, that from first to last he has nothing to reproach his idol with."

"No," admitted the Duchess, slowly, "I suppose not; but I don't fancy Irene will ever marry Bertram. She never seems to think about it."

His Grace made no rejoinder. He frequented his mother's house oftener than usual in the month that followed. He was always ready to escort the ladies abroad; but he never seemed to devote himself specially to Irene, though he watched her carefully.

"Well," said Lady Lilian Carew to him one morning, when the season was waning, and the Duchess and her adopted child were talking of leaving town, "what do you think of your mother's experiment?"

"I would rather hear what you think."

"I think it has succeeded beyond my expectations; the Duchess seems ten years younger."

"And Miss March?"

"She is one of the most admired girls in London. She is one of the beauties of the season, and yet she does not seem the least bit spoiled. She is just the same innocent child who came and took your mother's heart by storm."

"Just the same!"

"Prosperity has not spoiled her."

"Don't you know why?"

"I had rather not hear it; it is anything bitter. You have grown horribly sceptical lately, Duke."

"It is not bitter."

"Well?"

"Society has not spoiled Irene because she does not look to it for happiness. There is a shadow on her brow in the gayest scene. I have watched her pretty closely, Lady Lilian, and I believe she is the type of woman who sets love above all else."

"I like that type," protested Lady Lilian. "What good can the whole world be to a woman without love, pray?"

"Hush!" he said, gravely. "Let me finish. Irene has done her loving. How or when I cannot tell you, but before ever she came to my mother her love-story was over."

Lady Lilian did not speak. In her heart she agreed with him, and was wondering, if he had not made this discovery, whether he would not have sought to make Irene in very truth his mother's daughter.

"The pity of it," said his Grace, fiercely. "What could the man be like to win such a treasure as that girl's heart and scorn it?"

"He may not have scorned it."

"Nonsense! I beg your pardon, Lady Lilian, but Irene is not the girl for secret understandings or clandestine engagements. She is as free to accept love as she appears to be. It is only her own heart that is bound—bound to a memory."

"Well, your mother is the gainer. It would have been a little hard on the Duchess if Irene had married directly she adopted her!"

"I suppose so."

"Are you going away with them?"

"I don't know. Where are they going?"

"Is it possible you have not heard?"

"It was unsettled last time I saw them."

"They are going to Yorkshire."

"Yorkshire!"

"You know your mother possesses a dower-house about five miles the other side of Castleton? Well, she has taken a fancy to spend a month there."

"How does Miss March like the plan?"

"She is delighted! Her father's grave is somewhere near, and I fancy your mother chose Monkton Wynde as an especial pleasure to her!"

"She ought to have living pleasures, not morbid visits to dead men's graves."

"You don't ask me where I am going?"

"I beg your pardon, Lady Lilian."

"Don't apologise. Your mother has asked

me to spend the time of my husband's absence with her. We are both so pleased."

"It will be very nice for my mother."

"And for me!"

"I suppose Castleton is still shut up?"

"Oh, yes! I think the Earl must feel the uncertainty very much; he looks dreadfully ill and harassed."

"That is his wife doing, I expect. Lady Castleton is going the pace pretty rapidly; she must be the fastest woman in London. She seems to rush on from one pleasure to another. I can't understand how Rex finds his income stand it. That's a matter of fact, though he hasn't got an income. His living on expectations."

"Expectations!"

"Most people know it, Lady Lilian. The Jews have come down pretty handsomely on the chance of his getting the estate, and paying their exorbitant interest for their home. I don't wonder at his looking harassed; living in such a way must be awfully trying."

"It's his wife's fault."

"That's the first time I ever heard you bark on a woman, Lady Lilian!"

"I don't like the Countess."

"Neither do I!"

But he liked his husband, and meeting Rosamond that day he invited him to lunch, and tried hard to banish the troubled look from his face.

"Where are you going, old fellow?"

"Germany, I think," Lady Castleton informed of London, and we must go somewhere."

Monkton did not like the sound of "Germany" in the tone his friend spoke it.

"My mother is going down to Monkton Wynde. I have a sort of idea of going too. Why won't you and the Countess come with me? You know my mother is never so happy as with a houseful of visitors."

"I should like it of all things."

"Then we'll consider it settled."

"I'm afraid not, Bertram!"

"Why not?"

"I must take my wife to Germany."

The Duke knew perfectly well that Lady Castleton had got mixed up with a very bad set, and that there was one or two notorious card-sharpers in her acquaintance. If she wanted to go to Germany merely to follow these birds of prey, better a hundred times that she remained safely in England.

"Will you let me try my powers of persuasion upon the Countess, and do my best to get her to give us the pleasures of her society?"

Reginald sighed.

"It would be of no use!"

"Are we so unhappy as to have offended her?"

"Oh, no!"

"Castleton," said the young Duke warmly, linking his arm within his friend's and drawing him into his own particular sanctum. "We have been friends from boyhood."

"You'd better cut me, Bertram, you had, indeed. I don't think I shall ever be anything but a drawback to everyone."

"I have no intention of cutting you; but I do want to know what's the matter with you?"

"Nothing!"

"My dear fellow, that won't do with me. Have the kindness just to look in the glass."

"Well!"

"It's not well. Man alive, can't you see how you've altered? You've aged ten years in as many months!"

"I know it."

"It can't be without a cause."

"A cause," muttered Rex, desperately. "I tell you, Monkton, I have cause enough to throw myself into the Thames."

"Now, Rex, you don't leave this room without telling me everything. I may be a few years your junior, but you'll find me as staunch a friend as any man could possibly be."

"I know that, Bertram."

"Well, then!"

"You know about my uncle's will?"

"Perfectly."

"You can guess how I am living now?"

"Pretty accurately."

"Well, I never liked it, but it is only these last months that the degradation of it all has come home to me! Monkton, if I never inherit my uncle's estate, if this awful debt hangs like an incubus on my shoulders, I shall be as much an outcast from all civilized society as though I lived on a desert island. I shall be what people call disreputable."

Monkton nodded.

"You admit that, Bertram?"

"Yes; but you've no need to think you won't be able to pay up. How much is it?"

"Seventy thousand pounds!"

The Duke whistled.

"When?"

"In three yearly parts."

"The first?"

"Three years from last April."

"And how much will you have received for this?"

"Thirty thousand."

"I wish you'd take my advice."

"What is it?"

"Get clear of the whole concern. Tell these people you feel doubts as to your cousin's health. They'll take alarm, and be only too glad to accept their advances up to the present date, with moderate interest."

"Where is the money to come from?"

Bertram looked as hesitating as a woman.

"Or you'll let me write you a cheque for all long since; you know we've been intimate all my life."

"Bertram, dear old fellow, Heaven bless you, but I could not!"

"You might trust me!"

"You don't understand!" said Rex, hoarsely. "We are over head and ears in debt! I have tried in vain to curtail the expenses, but I can't do it!"

Even then he spoke no word of disparagement of his wife. Bertram thought he had rarely seen such chivalrous love.

"Look here, Rex; don't go bothering yourself to a thread-paper. Come down to Monkton Wynde. The Priory will be shut up, but the Wynde is a jolly place, with heaps of fishing, and that sort of thing. I have no doubt we could manage to amuse Lady Castleton."

"I am sure she would not consent!"

"Why not?"

"I would rather not tell you."

"I shall imagine her ladyship hates us!"

"Then I must confess the truth. Rosamond has an almost insane desire to enter Castleton as its mistress. She knows nothing of law, and all that I can say will not convince her that if I walked boldly up to the place, and took possession of it, we should be no nearer our inheritance. Now, Monkton Wynde is barely six miles from the Park."

"I understand; but Lady Castleton is hardly likely to go and claim Castleton on her own account; besides, this reason explains your reluctance to take her there, but not your certainty that she would refuse an invitation!"

"I cannot give you the other reason; you will have every right to feel offended."

"You think she would find it dull, that my mother is not sufficient company; but Lady Lilian Carew and Miss March will both be with us!"

He saw the Earl's face change at the last name.

"She is very pretty!" Rex said, carelessly.

"Which shows how very little you know her. Any one who had seen much of Irene would never describe her by such an hackneyed adjective!"

Rex smiled.

"Don't be indignant, Bertram. I admire her very much, her face is so sweet and pure! but I am always haunted by an idea that I have seen her before."



[PAULINE FEELS SHE IS ON THE RIGHT TRACK.]

"And does Lady Castleton share your idea?"

"No."

"I don't think I have ever seen her and Miss March together. What a striking contrast they would make!"

"Yes. My wife is English, but there is a strong tinge of foreign superstition in her blood, and she has taken up the strangest fancy regarding Miss March."

"What is it?"

"That she is destined to work her some grievous wrong. I have reasoned in vain with Rosamond. She maintains that some awful trouble will fall on us through the Duchess's adopted daughter!"

Nothing could be said after this. It was of no use for the Duke to repeat his invitation.

The two men felt there was nothing for them but to part.

Bertram held out his hand.

"Reckon on me as a friend, Rex," he said, earnestly, "come what may!"

It was almost five when the Earl reached home.

His wife was alone in her boudoir, and exceedingly lovely did she look in a lace dress with turquoise trimming. She was dressed on all occasions with the most exquisite art, the greatest skill, and Lord Castleton had always enjoyed the sight.

Perhaps now he felt the expense, but he never let his vexatious fall on her.

He went up to her, and took her in his arms as tenderly as he had done in those far-off days when he believed himself a millionaire.

"Where have you been, Reginald?"

Her tone had a fretful ring, her face an anxious, troubled look. People cannot live in such awful fear as that which hung over Rosamond without sometimes betraying their uneasiness in voice and feature.

"With Monkton. He wanted us to go down and spend August at Monkton Wynde."

"What did you say?"

"I refused. I knew you would not like it."

"I should like it better than anything, Rex."

"Rosamond!"

"Well, I hate shams," replied the Countess, forgetting that her whole life might be so described. "I should enjoy staying with the old Duchess and opening her eyes."

"To what?"

"To the treachery of her adopted darling. Irene, indeed; her name's not Irene, nor March either. Rex. Take my word for it, that girl has a history."

"I think you are mistaken, Rosamond."

"Indeed, I'm not."

"Even so, dear, what does it matter to us?"

"A great deal, I can see that she is scheming to catch the Duke. A pretty thing, indeed, that when I take my place as Lady of Castleton to have that pale-faced chit setting herself up as my superior!"

Reginald said nothing; he had learnt there were moments when it was worse than useless for him to oppose his wife.

"Can't you write to the Duke, and tell him we have changed our minds? I should like, of all things, to spend August at Monkton Wynde."

"I could write of course, but—"

"But you won't!"

"I don't think it would be wise."

"Why not, Rex?"

"It will not lessen our regrets for Castleton to be so near the grand old place. Be advised, Rosamond."

He was interrupted—a footman appeared.

"Mr. Ashwin is in the study, asking for you, my lord."

Lady Castleton caught her husband's arm, as though for support. She seemed almost sinking to the ground from excitement.

"I cannot see him Rex; do not ask me. It would kill me."

"There is no need, Rose. He was my uncle's confidential friend. I daresay he has come with some communication about Castleton."

The Countess forgot her fear (a "fear real enough, though, to have blanched her cheek"). She even clapped her hands.

"Don't lose a minute, Rex. Come back to me at once. Something tells me all is well, and at last Castleton is ours. I feel it here," and she laid one hand upon her heart.

Rex felt nothing. He knew not whether hope or fear possessed him, as with a tender caress he left her and sought the lawyer's presence.

(To be continued.)

FINE TABLE LINEN.—Some luncheon cloths are embroidered in white or colours. Others have coloured borders, matching the napkins. For fruit napkins are used the square white ones, with coloured borders, or the ordinary coloured napkins in dark Persian colours, checker-board pattern, or other designs. The white napkins are the most popular, and as they can be used only a few times without being easily stained, they come only of ordinary quality. Doyleys, on which the finger-bowl rests, are of white pongee silk, hem-stitched and embroidered with a conventional design in Kensington stitch. Others are of linen cambric, made up in the same style, or covered entirely with the drawn work which is so beautiful and fashionable, each one having a different design. The latter are very expensive, costing sometimes three or four dollars apiece, and many ladies make a large amount of money in doing this work. For dinner cloths the heavy white damask is used, and centre pieces are of satin or plush, embroidered and edged with gold lace, or of linen drawn work and embroidery, with lace trimmings. Sometimes embroidered pieces are also used at each end of the table for the candelabra.



["THERE IS A LITTLE CROWD ON BEACON POINT," SIDONIE CRIED. "I THINK SOMETHING IS WRONG."]

NOVELETTE—concluded.]

FROM SHADOW TO SHINE.

—:-:

CHAPTER IV.—(continued.)

One after another the guests arrived; and last of all came the Denbys, bringing Lionel in their wake.

There was no chance for speech then, with all eyes upon them, but the love in her eyes told him all he wished to know.

The haggard face she looked on touched her heart to deeper pity and pain.

He took her in to dinner. But neither talked much, and only touched on indifferent topics; and even when the gentlemen joined the ladies in the drawing-room there seemed small hope of any personal conversation.

With aching heart, and hope grown faint, Sidonie listened to the cheerful voices around arranging for charades, and wondered how she should live out the dreary evening.

But she had a staunch ally in her hostess, who, flitting across the room to Lionel, whispered.—

"When the first side come in, slip from the room, no one will notice you. You will find Sidonie in the green-parlour—the first door on the left."

Then, before he could thank her, she moved away, and joining Sidonie, said gently,—

"Go to the green-parlour, my dear, and wait there until Mr. Travers comes. Be kind to him, child; he has had a hard time."

The beautiful eyes lifted to hers were full of gratitude.

"You are most good, Mrs. Clarke; I should like to thank you if I could."

"Nonsense, child! I want no thanks! I only wish to see you happy. Now go;" and the girl needed no second bidding.

There was no light in the green-parlour, save for the faint glimmer cast by a moonless

summer sky; but she easily found her way to the oriel window, round which purple clematis and jasmine were climbing in wild luxuriance, and there waited Lionel's coming.

CHAPTER V.

She had not long to wait. Soon she heard his footfall outside, then his hand was on the door, and she waited silently for him to join her; all power of speech or movement seemed to have forsaken her. She could only stand there, white of cheek and lip, with loving, anguished eyes turned wistfully upon him.

In silence he advanced, and took one of her slim hands in his, looking into her beautiful piteous face with such hopeless love and yearning that her heart died within her.

"Sidonie!"

Ah! the awful despair in his voice! In it she read renunciation of love, of joy; the quiet taking up of a burden almost too heavy even for this strong man to bear.

Reticence was forgotten, and all her thought was to comfort him.

She put her arms about him, and laid her face upon his breast, whispering such sweet words of love and faith as made him thrill and tremble under her touch.

But he had come to her with a purpose, and from it he would not shrink. So he loosed the clinging hands from about his neck, and set her a little apart, scarcely daring now to look at her.

"My darling," he said, "you know what we are here to say?"

She shivered a moment, and a low cry broke from her lips. It wrung his heart with an added pang; but, true to his resolve, he went on with no very apparent change in his voice.—

"To-night, Sidonie, we part—I fear, for all time. To-night it is good-bye!"

"No!—no!—no!" she cried, with sudden passion. "You must not leave me thus!"

Take me with you, Lionel!—take me from this dreadful place!"

She could not tell how fiercely she was tempting him, and his long silence frightened her. But in that silence he had fought with and conquered self.

"Sidonie, have you thought what such a step would mean for you? My dear, I am a poor, gloomy fellow at best for you to love. Then how can I ask such a sacrifice from you? Marriage with me means giving up of all you love and prize. Could you bear to give up home and friends for one so despised as I? Think well, my darling! You know that from the day on which you became my wife you would be compelled to endure slights and scorn; to feel yourself cut off from parents and sisters; regarded as an alien, a shame and dishonour to your race? Are you strong enough to bear this?"

"I do not know," she cried, in a wild way. "I only feel I love you, Lionel; and I shall love you until I die!"

"Dear and true heart!" he answered, sadly, "you cannot count the cost of marrying me; so it remains for me to show it you. Make my task as light as you can, Sidonie. Heaven knows that even then it will be as death to me! My darling, I am so much older than you, so much wiser in all matters of grief, because of my long apprenticeship to it, that I say as my wife, much as you love me, you would not be happy. To know that your father's house was closed to you for ever, that your mother's heart had grown hard against you, that your name was used to scare your young sisters into wisdom, and that they thought of you with fear and scorn; my dear, all this you would have to bear, and, save for me, would stand alone in a world suddenly grown hard!"

He paused and looked intreatingly at her; but she had hidden her face amongst the fragrant flowers of the creeping plants about the window.

"I could not go, sweetheart, without

word from you—some gentle memory on which to brood through the long, long years of a ruined life, without bidding you forget me if you can—seeing that in forgetfulness only can you be happy. Trust me, Sidonie; I shall rather rejoice than deplore that a new love brings you joy. Dear (and now he had possessed himself again of her hand)—dear, if such a good thing comes to you remember that I am glad in your gladness—that *now* if I am yet thanking Heaven for its goodness."

She looked up then with streaming eyes.

"Are you a man in your unselfishness?" she cried. "Oh, my dear! oh, my dear! what ever comes I must be. I *shall* be, a better woman, because you have loved me. But—but," and here she faltered. "I am stronger than you believe, and having given myself to you I will keep my promise intact. Dear, if we never meet again, if no after yearnings bring us nearer than now we are, I shall not forget. Do not, I pray you, believe all the faith is with you. I have yet to learn how to be false."

He caught her to his heart, and held her close in silent agony. But for the terrible memory of the past he would have urged her to fly with him; but how could he do this when he thought of Hangy? No, she was never for him; there could be but one ending to their love, and he alone was to blame. If only he could bear all the anguish of the long years before them he would not complain.

"You are very young, my dear," he said, with tender sadness; "very young, and may well be pardoned if in the course of time my image grows a faint memory to you, and a newer, happier love comes to brighten your life. Remember always, sweethearts, that you are free unconditionally—that I never had, and never can have, any claim upon you. Remember, too, that I am always your most faithful, most humble friend and servant, ready at any and every time to answer to a call for assistance or service."

She was not weeping now, as she stood before him, silent and white as the starry blossoms about her head. Her hands were fast locked, and her teeth set hard to keep down that wild cry rising in her heart to her very lips; but she could have fallen on her knees and worshipped this man in the glory of his unselfishness, his renunciation of all good things. She wished he had decided otherwise; at a word from him she would have followed him to the ends of the world, forgetful of all else. But he had chosen, and being wiser than she, had chosen the best for her. There remained nothing but obedience, and would she not school herself even to that because he wished it?

"When we have said good-bye, Sidonie, I shall leave this house and Croftlands; do not fear to meet me any more. It is best—is it not, dear heart, to make this separation final?"

"It is best," she answered under her breath. "My strength is almost spent. Oh! Lionel! oh, my darling! what shall I say to you? With what words can I let you go? Believe me if you can, the thought of your loneliness, your friendlessness, is the bitterest drop in all my bitter cup. Oh! it breaks my heart—it breaks my heart—to picture your solitude and grief."

A faint smile flickered over his face.

"My dear, you must think of me as a busy man, one whose hours and days will be too full of real work to permit much brooding. And as love is denied me, I must content myself with wooing his rival—fame."

"And," disregarding his last words, "shall I never hear of or from you again?"

"Of me you may—from me no; it is my duty to help you to forget."

She hid her face a moment in her hands, wailing rather than saying "what has our love left us? Nothing—nothing, save a scrap of writing, a portrait, a few faded flowers. What a sorry harvest with which to satisfy one's hunger. Oh, my dear! I hurt you with my complainings, I who should think only

how to comfort you. I will say no more of my grief; let it be my endeavour to give you a little ray of happiness in these last few moments."

"You have given me joy from first to last. I never knew happiness until I knew you."

He took her hands and drew them about his neck, and for a moment there was utter silence; then the girl spoke.

"Dear, it is as though one of us was entering the dark valley; and at such a time all mists are cleared away, all reserve forgotten, between the one who goes and she who stays behind. So now I speak without fear that you will misconstrue anything I say, or think me grown unmaidenly. So Lionel, when you find out—as you will—how empty life has grown, how your solitude weighs on you like a nightmare dream, and feel your strength to beat all this slowly slipping from you—send for me, and in spite of all I will come to you—whenever such a message reaches me it will find me ready."

He held her close whilst he kissed the unturned pallid face, the golden glory of her hair.

"How happy we might have been!" he groaned, "but I cannot be; and so sweetheart, who can never be my wife, dearest and best, let us part while we still have strength. 'Heaven bless you and help you. Heaven grant this is the hour which but precedes the dawn.'

His deep voice faltered then, and the trembling girl lay silent in his arms.

"Good-bye, good-bye! May all good things be yours."

"Oh! not yet—not yet!" she cried wildly. "It is too soon. I—I cannot say good-bye."

With an inexpressibly tender touch he lifted her face to his level, and at the pity and pain in his grave eyes she cried out afresh,—

"Kiss me, beloved, and let me go; the end has come to us."

Something in his voice, the deep mournfulness of his face, compelled her obedience. Like a child she lifted her lips to his, but kissed him with the desperate passion of a woman who sees all she loves slipping from her. Then came broken words and cries, inarticulate utterances of a stricken heart—the deep tones of a man's voice-speaking vain comfort, a man's groan more terrible than tears or loud complaining; then very gently Lionel unloosed the clinging arms, set the miserable girl aside, and went out, not daring to look back.

And she! Poor child, at first she hardly realised that he was gone; but when the bitter truth was borne in upon her mind, she sank down before the open window, and hiding her woe-worn face on her arms, she prayed for him whose love had brought her to this bitter pass.

A long time after Mrs. Clarke found her, still in the same attitude, white and dry-eyed.

"My dear!" she said very gently, "this meeting has not ended as I hoped; but you must try to believe better days are in store for you. Now, are you brave enough to join us? Already your absence is noticed. Mr. Travers I have accepted for by telling a whitie. He is supposed to have left Croftlands in answer to a telegraphic summons concerning important business. Will you come with me, dear?"

"Yes, I cannot begin to wear my mask too early," Sidonie said with extreme bitterness. "Nothing but pride will save me now from my friends, kindly criticisms."

So she went back to the merry throng—very white, it is true, and very quiet. But then it was understood she was indisposed, had been compelled to leave the hot, fragrant room through sudden, deadly faintness, and none of the guests had any inkling of the truth but Susie Denby, who would have spoken words of loving sympathy had opportunity and Sidonie permitted.

At last the heavy evening wore away, and the girl was glad to leave the hospitable roof;

glad to gain the shelter of her own room, where she might act, look and move as she pleased. And then, indeed, her hard-won composure deserted her, and she fell to weeping bitterly, abandoning herself for this one hour to the indulgence of a grief too great for words.

But the morrow found her calm and pale; patient in words and ways, showing a piteous eagerness to please her father, and win some kindly acknowledgment from him. In this way the days and weeks crept on; and she was often tempted to give up the bitter battle, to fly from those who gave her scorn in lieu of love, who suspected her every word, watched her every action. But as yet she held on, enduring, as best she could, coldness and slights, suffering agonies of sick longing for one look, one word from Lionel.

CHAPTER VI.

LIONEL went back to his dreary chambers and uncongenial life, and tried to drown sorrow by applying himself more earnestly than ever to the dry details of his profession. He allowed himself no rest, no relaxation, for indolence would but give opportunities of brooding over his calamity and Sidonie's.

Days came and went unheeded, and the great heart would sometimes grow faint with its burden, and often the temptation to write to Sidonie assailed him. Battle after battle was fought, and as many successive victories won, lost each one left him weaker, and in work lay His only safety.

Summer passed, and autumn, with its harvest of fruit and grain, told too surely of the rapidly advancing winter, but the seasons made small difference with Lionel's way of life. He had not ventured to see Miss Thorne, and began to think she had forgotten him, or gone over to the enemy, when one morning a letter reached him from her, the friendly and gentle tone of which brought faint pleasure even to him.

"Dear Lionel.—Why have you deserted me? What is my fault? Do you think, dear boy, that anything that has chanced to you can alter my great regard? Won't you come to the lonely old woman who holds you next to Sidonie in her affection? I shall be at home and alone all to-morrow.—Always yours affectionately,

"RACHEL THORNE."

Yes, he would go to her. Perhaps she would tell him something of Sidonie, and he rose the next morning in a brighter frame of mind than usual. He found the little elderly lady waiting for him in the very room where he had told his love. She looked delighted but nervous as he entered, and it needed the clasp of his friendly fingers to reassure her.

"I was afraid you would not come," she said, very gently. "I thought, perhaps, you were so angry with my brother that you wished to end all intercourse with me."

He hastened to assure her of his unchanged esteem, and the pleasure he had in seeing her again, so that the pretty faded face flushed with delight; but the faint pink died out quickly.

"You are not well," she said, anxiously, scanning the worn features before her. "What have you been doing to yourself?"

"Nothing," he answered, with a faint smile. "Nothing, I assure you; don't blame me, but the work."

"But why do you work so hard? You have no need."

"I am afraid I have forgotten how to be idle," he answered, gently. "At all events, I know my busiest hours are my happiest. Miss Thorne," abruptly, "have you no news for me?"

She shook her head.

"My poor boy, no! Sidonie is forbidden to correspond with me, and even my letters to her are carefully reviewed. My brother informed me that if I ventured to mention you

to any member of the family, no letters of mine should reach my niece."

He sighed heavily.

"It is very hard, but no complaints will bring us redress."

"No," sorrowfully, "and I have been quite afraid to meet you, although I so much wished to do so—afraid that you would feel sore with me too."

"I should be a brute if I did; you have proved yourself such a staunch friend!"

"And you will say I am deserting you?" with an anxious tone in her voice. "I felt you would rather hear the truth from me than anyone else. Next week I am going away to a great distance—"

"But surely not for long?" he asked, eagerly, feeling the little woman was a link to bind him to the past, and hoping in some way to hear of Sidonie from her.

"For a year. A cousin of mine has been left a widower with three young children, and I am going to keep house for him until his sister arrives from India to take charge of them. But of course she remains with her husband until his term of service expires."

"And where are you going?"

"To Edinburgh. I feel very melancholy at the mere idea of leaving my home, but it is my duty to go—is it not? And a year will pass quickly. Then I hoped, too, you would let me write you sometimes, and occasionally find time to answer me. I would tell you all I can glean of Sidonie's doing and sayings," she added, as if she thought he would need some inducement to write such a humble little personage as herself.

She was surprised and delighted when he answered warmly.—

"I was going to beg you to place me on your lists of correspondents. You are one of my few friends, and I cannot afford to risk losing you!"

"Thank you; and Lionel—I may call you Lionel?—try to hope on a little longer; perhaps all will be as you wish yet. Why do you shake your head?"

"Because I do not believe the future holds any good thing for me, and it is best not to indulge in castle-building; the inevitable subsequent disappointment would only aggravate matters!"

"Perhaps you are wise, and yet it seems hard to accept the pessimist's view so early in life. What, must you go?" as he rose, saying had an important engagement which must shorten his visit. "You will come again before I leave for Scotland?"

"Yes, I will haunt Mount Royal for the next six days, and you will get unutterably weary of me before the time of your departure comes."

"You know better than that, dear boy! Good-bye, come early to-morrow!"

The six days came and went; and Lionel, having "seen Miss Thorne off," found himself once more, to all intents and purposes, alone, and applied himself with redoubled energy to his work.

There were times when he knew he would be wise to desist, to take some little rest; but rest meant thought, and thought was madness.

So he held on his way, until men began to remark on his gaunt frame and haggard face, on his listless manner; and one or two gave him good advice, at which he laughed, and refused to follow it.

So weeks passed into months, and it was now early spring. Lionel was retained as counsel for the defence in a case of arson, and as his client's position was as critical as it could very well be, he was unusually interested.

But he was physically and mentally ill, and try as he would could not bring his powers of wit and discernment to the fore. Men who knew him were surprised at the falling-off they saw in him; some said they had predicted it. He had matured too early, and had reached his zenith, so now could do nothing but decline; a few attributed the marked

diminution of forensic eloquence to its real cause—bodily illness.

But none were quite prepared for the catastrophe which made the trial one to be remembered. It had been greatly protracted, many witnesses coming forward, most of them with little to tell, but telling that little in a very verbose style. On the third morning, however, a man was called, whose evidence seemed to make all defence futile, and all in the court believed the prisoner a doomed man.

Lionel rose to cross-examine, but he spoke in so low a tone that his words were scarcely audible even to those nearest him. Seeing this he made a superhuman effort to overcome the dreadful faintness stealing over him—but in vain. A moment he gasped feeble, inarticulate words, a moment swayed to and fro, and then fell suddenly forward with a heavy shock!

A scene of intense excitement followed, and Lionel was borne from court still insensible. Inquiries were made with regard to his friends, and when it was discovered he had none he was conveyed to his chambers to be given over to the charge of his charwoman and a friend who professed to be a nurse.

Day after day went by, and still he lay delirious in the clutches of the fever fiend, and the women tended him in a desultory, uninterested fashion, occupying the greater part of the time in feasting at the sick man's expense, and overhauling such property as was not under lock and key.

The medical man came and went, looking very grave over his patient and very stern at the nurses, remonstrating now and again with them on the general untidiness and discomfort of the sick-room. But the old harridans treated his remonstrances with covert impertinence, and revenged themselves by paying still less attention to the sufferer.

Fortunately the news of Lionel's illness reached Tom Denby at last, and, having been to see the patient, he ran down to Croftlands to consult with his mother what should be done for him. When he arrived he found she was entertaining visitors, and consequently his business must wait a little. He was annoyed, and did not attempt to hide his chagrin. One or two guests remarked his manner, and Sidonie, whom he had taken into dinner, said,—

"Mr. Denby, what have you on your mind?"

He suddenly remembered there had been a faint rumour of love-passages between her and Lionel, and said hastily,—

"I wonder if I ought to tell you? I am here on poor Travers's account."

Her face was very white and her eyes downcast, but she said gently,—

"Why poor Travers?"

"Do not you know? He has been lying ill at his chamber these three weeks, and, although conscious, is not out of danger by any means!"

"Who is with him?"

And her voice was so calm that but for the anguish of her face he would have thought her heartless.

"Two old wretches, who fleece him to their heart's content—dirty, drunken women of the type of 'Sairey Gamp!' I want my mother to go back with me."

"Wait," she said, tremulously. "I have the greatest right. I will go. After dinner you will take me home, and I will break the news to my friends!"

"You're a brick—I beg your pardon—I meant a good sort! But, Miss Sidonie, I'm afraid you are reckoning without your host. Mr. Thorne will never consent."

"My first duty is to Lionel now," she answered, under her breath. "Nothing will prevent me going to him!"

"But," pitifully, "you do not know the worst."

She turned on him with a great horror in her eyes,

"You have not been deceiving me? He is not dead?"

And he saw the white hands grasp her skirts as though she sought to keep down a cry of pain.

"Miss Sidonie, no; but he is blind, and it is doubtful if he will ever recover his sight!"

"Blind! Oh, Heaven!" and she seemed about to break down, but remembering her surroundings recovered herself by a great effort, and in silence sat out the melancholy meal.

At last Mrs. Denby gave the signal to rise, and turning hurriedly to Tom, Sidonie said,—

"I shall not fail you!"

Then she followed her hostess.

"Mrs. Denby, I must go home. Your son has brought me terrible news of Mr. Travers. He is ill—sightless—I am going to him!"

"My dear," in a shocked tone, "this cannot be true, it is too cruel! Come into the breakfast-room, and I'll send for Tom."

When Tom came he could only confirm Sidonie's words. The elder woman was pale and troubled-looking as she took the girl in her arms and bade her follow the dictates of her own conscience, and suddenly broke into tears of love and pity.

Bat Sidonie was dry-eyed and calm.

Tom Denby escorted her home, where the scene between the hapless girl and her infatuated family was worse even than he had anticipated. Sidonie was firm in her resolve not to be shaken, and only pleaded for love and pardon with her father.

But he would not hear her. If she went of her own free will to this man so hated and accursed, she became an alien to her own home, an outcast from her people.

She stood a moment white as snow, still as a statue, and Tom feared for her resolution; then she said sorrowfully,—

"Father, you have my sisters to more than supply my place. He has no one, and my duty is to him. Good-bye, good-bye, my dear! I shall never return to anger you again!"

So she went from the house and Croftlands, Tom Denby escorting her to town and Lionel's chambers, where they found the nurses asleep beside a table literally covered with tumblers of all sorts and sizes, and exhaling all sorts of vile odours.

Sidonie went quietly forward, and sinking on her knees beside the bed took one hot, wasted hand in hers.

"Lionel," she said, almost in a whisper, "Lionel, I have come to nurse you!"

The weary face turned upon her with a faint flickering of joy, and then he said, with that apathy so common in people dangerously ill, so painful for the loving heart to bear,—

"You are good, but it is too late!"

She stifled the sobs which rose from her aching heart, and, rising, motioned Tom to come forward.

"Wake and dismiss those women," she said, quickly; "their very presence suffocates me!"

He did as she bade him, and was regaled with sundry exclamations and reproaches of a not too savoury nature; and when he paid each one her wage—which was four times the amount of her due—and bade them go, the charwoman reviled him shrilly, whilst her companion endeavoured to ingratiate herself with the indignant Sidonie.

"Are you going?" Tom said, in a low voice, which with him meant mischief.

"No, I ain't!" protested the charwoman, "so there. Get out yerself!"

Patience was never the young man's forte, and with quick movement he thrust her outside, hurling her bonnet after her; and the other woman, feeling discretion to be the better part of valour, followed her staggeringly downstairs, where an hour later Tom found both in a deep, drunken slumber.

He would have stayed until morning, but this Sidonie refused to allow, saying she had so much to do that she should have no time to be lonely.

She gave Lionel his medicine and watched

by him until he fell asleep, then began to move quietly about, reducing the room to order, making all things brighter and pleasanter. Then she sat down to think of all that lay before her, to weep quietly over the bitter words spoken that night, over her own forlorn condition.

But when the doctor came in the morning he found her calm and almost cheerful. He looked askance at the tall, *svelte* figure and perfect face.

"You have come to nurse him?" he asked.
And she answered gently.—
"Yes; I am his affianced wife!"

CHAPTER VII.

DOCTOR TRENT advised that a trained nurse should be engaged, and to this Sidonie gladly consented, as much to avoid scandal as for the sake of help; and in a few hours a quiet-faced, quiet-voiced woman arrived—a lady by birth and education—very few years older than Sidonie herself.

The sweet face was beautiful to look upon, with a faint pink tinge of health on either cheek, the eyes blue and calm, kindly and true, and Sidonie felt drawn to her.

The watching and ministering to Lionel's wants were equally shared, and soon his naturally splendid vitality began to reassert itself, and his nurses had the satisfaction of seeing him struggle back to strength and thought.

Often and often, seeing his utter helplessness, the aimless wandering of his sightless eyes, Sidonie was tempted to weep and cry out, but his very patience gave her the strength she so sorely needed.

But it was hard to think his eyes would never light with pleasure at her coming, never again rest with delight on the beauty of earth and sky, for very slender hopes were entertained respecting his restoration.

He was very quiet in those days, and never addressed Sidonie in language of love; his long habit of self-abnegation had not deserted him, and it seemed to him a cruel thing to bind her fresh young life to his, made so suddenly dark.

One day, when Nurse Ottridge was lying down to rest, and Sidonie sat reading to him, he suddenly stopped her by a gesture, and one wasted hand strayed over the coverlet in search of her.

"Sidonie," he said, gently, "I am getting quite strong again. You will soon be leaving me!" He felt her tremble, and went on hurriedly, "I cannot thank your parents sufficiently for lending you so long to me. They have been more good than I deserved!"

She sank on her knees beside the bed and laid her cheek to his, with a touching gesture of love and protection.

"Lionel, do you wish me to go?"

He sighed heavily.

"I would keep you always if I could; but now that I shall soon be about again I must send you away. Dear, you know how the world talks, and I would not have the lightest shadow on your fair name!"

"There is one way open to us that will obviate all necessity for parting," she said, flushing darkly, and trembling at her own boldness.

"And that?" he questioned, not daring to believe all her words implied.

"You—you must make me your wife," and now the fair face was hidden amongst the pillows, as though the poor blind eyes could see its confusion and shame.

He laid his hand gently on the bowed, bright head.

"My darling! my beautiful darling! You do not know what you propose, what your life would be, linked to mine so helpless, so useless now! You tempt me sorely, but, thank Heaven, I have got strength to place you first. Think, dear, how poorly I should repay your goodness if I took advantage of your gener-

osity! What great cause your friends would have to denounce me a second time for robbing them of their treasure. No, no! Sidonie, my darling, it must not be; you will go home—"

But she interrupted wildly,—

"I have no home, and no friends. Dear, forgive my deceit; my father did not send me to you. I came without his consent. I am an alien and an outcast."

He rose up in his bed, troubled and perplexed.

"Sidonie! this cannot be true! Oh! my dear, have I cost you such a bitter sacrifice? Write, write, write!" with increasing distress; "say I yield all claim to you, that you will return to them—"

"It would be vain. You know, Lionel, what my father is; he cursed me when I came away, and forbade me ever to enter his doors again. So you see," she added, half distressed and half happy, "you must marry me if you would not see me homeless."

"But the sacrifice! the cruel sacrifice! Sidonie, your pity will wreck your life!"

"It is not pity," passionately, "I love you! Oh! my poor blind darling, you were never so dear to me as now. Do not send me away!"

He folded his arms about her, drew her head upon his breast.

"Dear wife!" he said, in a low, uncertain tone, "dear wife, you must have time to count the cost. I am a poor fellow now, prematurely aged, brought very low. I shall be a burden to you all my days. Take until to-morrow to consider this step."

"No," gently and firmly. "I have had plenty of time for reflection, and nothing you can say will make me afraid, Lionel. Dear Lionel, let me be to you what you have but now called me? Oh! my dear, what can you do without me now? Will any other love you and serve you as I can and shall?"

He was silent a long while, and then said, hesitatingly,—

"Are you sure, Sidonie, that it is pity, and not love, that urges you on to this? Think again, dear!"

"It is love!" quietly. "Are not you satisfied, sweetheart? What more shall I say?"

He was content, and, sitting there in the gathering dusk, such peace and such happiness fell upon him as he had never known in all the years of his life.

They were very silent, their hearts too full for speech; she had drawn his dark head down upon her loyal breast, and he held her hand clasped close and warm.

It was thus Nurse Ottridge found them, and Sidonie motioned her to join them.

"Who is there?" asked the blind man, turning his head in the direction from which the light sound of her steps came. "Is it nurse? Oh, nurse! you must congratulate me, and help build me up as soon as possible. We are going to be married!"

Her congratulations were warm and heartfelt, but she said,—

"You won't be able to stir out for three or four weeks yet, and, all things considered, the marriage should take place as soon as possible. Why not have a special license and be married here?"

"Sidonie is not of age; the marriage could only be compassed by perjury."

"I had not thought of that, unless her father consents, which he will doubtless do. Write to him at once, Miss Thorne."

"And suppose that he consents," Lionel said; "can you bear, Sidonie, to dispense with all the pomp and ceremony attending ordinary weddings?"

"Ours is not an ordinary wedding, and the quieter it is the better I shall be pleased."

Sidonie wrote her father of her determination, and asked his sanction to her marriage. His answer was as short as it was cruel.

"Your doings have no interest for me. You are none of mine, and I claim no authority over you. As you prefer your brother's murderer to home and friends it is best for you

to become his wife, to save you from a homeless condition."

She shed many bitter tears over the cruel words, but when Lionel asked what reply she had received, she answered,—

"Of course we could not expect much cordiality, but my father says I am my own mistress, and may please myself"—the first and last deceit she ever practised upon him.

So a few days later they were married, Nurse Ottridge in her professional garb playing the part of bridesmaid, and Tom Denby giving away the bride.

Sidonie's heart was heavy at the thought of the alienation between her friends and herself, but if Lionel knew this it was from instinct, not from any word or sign of hers.

Surely it was the strangest of honeymoons, but they were content; and, under his bride's tender care, Lionel rapidly grew stronger, until, in the course of a few days, he was able to sit up for a few hours; and by the end of a fortnight Dr. Trent declared he might soon be moved to a more genial place.

They decided to go to Bournemouth, and to make the journey by easy stages, so that Lionel should not suffer a relapse from fatigue.

Sidonie was so cheerful, so tender, that he thought of her with a kind of wonder and reverence; and one day, possessing himself of her busy hands, said,—

"My dear, are you quite happy, or are you only a successful and clever actress?"

"I am happy, my dear. If you could see me you would know that!"

"Ah!" he sighed. "I shall never see you again, but I can recall every line of your face, the trick of your smile, the colour and light of your eyes; but I would give half my fortune to *really* see you again, if but for an hour. How I would drink my fill of rapture in that brief time!"

"Dear," the young wife said, falling on her knees beside him, and looking yearningly into the worn face, "are you quite hopeless of recovery? I am not."

"I dare not nourish any hope," he answered, sadly, "because disappointment would be too cruel."

"But Dr. Trent said that, with returning health, your chance grew greater, and that he believed, eventually, you might regain your sight, partially if not quite, if you could brace yourself to endure a very painful operation."

"I would endure anything short of death to win such a blessed boon," he answered, earnestly, "as much, perhaps more, darling, for your sake than my own!"

She leaned her cheek upon his hand.

"We will talk of this again; meanwhile, my darling, you have but to get quite strong and well. And if—if Heaven is so good as to give you back your sight—Oh, Lionel! Lionel! my poor dear!" and she broke down suddenly, crying for pity and love.

Only her emotion was shortlived, and she was full of remorse that she had pained him, so anxious to atone for what she called her wicked folly, that he smiled pathetically as he stroked the wealth of golden hair, and murmured such words of love and joy as comforted her heart, and thrilled her very soul.

The beautiful spring, with its myriad flowers, had come again; the air was laden with perfume and melody, and Lionel seemed to draw fresh life with every breath. And a sweet hope grew day by day in Sidonie's heart that her darling would not always be blind to the beauty so lavishly cast over hill and plain, and life was a glad and goodly thing to her once more.

In April Dr. Trent visited them, and after expressing astonishment and pleasure at the marked improvement in his patient, advised him to return to town at once, there to consult an eminent oculist, and place himself wholly in his hands.

So the pleasant villa was given up and the household goods transported to London, where Sidonie did her best to make the new home as attractive as the old.

In June the operation was to be performed, and Sidonie was almost confident of success, although both husband and occultist warned her not to build her hopes too high; "for," said the great man, "I cannot promise a good result."

"Heaven is good," she answered, gently, "and will hear my prayers."

CHAPTER VIII.

It was September, so hot that one could scarcely believe the summer was at an end, and a few weeks at most would strip the trees of their leaves, and take the glory from the earth.

Lionel and his wife were staying at a little hamlet on the south coast, and were very happy in the quiet life they led.

The operation had been performed, and successfully, and the only reminder of it was the green shade Lionel still wore, but which he hoped soon to discard.

"I shall begin work in a few weeks," he said one morning; "I am getting tired of inaction. Now, don't look so scared, little wife; you shall be my secretary, and spare my eyes until they have got used to labour. You will have any amount of copying to do, so make the most of your holiday; it will soon be over."

"Indeed!" Sidonie said, with a mocking smile; "I intend my life to be one whole holiday. Oh, Lionel! what do you think Mrs. Ives says? There are some visitors at Crag Inn; came only yesterday, and she assured me they were 'quite gentlefolk,' so if you are tired of me you have but to walk over and make acquaintance with them."

"Tired of you! You deserve I should take advantage of your information," laughing. "I believe I will. Are the said visitors of the fair sex? If so, look to your laurels, Sidonie!"

"They are three in number," disdaining any reply to his last words. "A lady and gentleman, and a lad about fourteen. Their names I do not know; suppose you inquire?"

"Suppose we go out instead of wasting this glorious morning in discussing strangers; but I warn you, Sidonie, unless your conduct is very circumspect, your conversation agreeable, I shall go over to the enemy. What do you say to that?"

"Nothing; I treat it with the contempt it deserves," laughing, and stepping out into the sunshine. "Shall we go on to the cliffs? We shall get more breezes there. How lovely it all is!"

So lovely that they were silent—feasting their eyes on the beauty of white cliffs and gleaming ocean, green fields where cattle browsed, and the latest flowers of summer lingered.

They followed a zig-zag, rocky path, which led them gradually away from the hamlet towards the distant cliffs. At last Sidonie spoke—

"There is a little crowd on Beacon Point. I think something is wrong. Shall we go on or turn back?"

"On by all means. If there is any excitement to be had I'm going to have it," laughing.

So they went on until they were so near to the crowd as to distinguish one or two faces. Leaning over the very edge of the cliff was a man who, by his dress, seemed a gentleman; and when, as they drew nearer, he lifted himself and turned with a wild gesture to the bystanders, who were mostly women, Sidonie cried out in sudden fear,—

"Lionel! Lionel! it is my father!" and would have run to him but that her husband restrained her.

He beckoned to one of the women, who answered his summons with alacrity.—

"What is it?"

"Oh, sir, the saddest thing. The poor gentleman and his son came but yesterday,

and the lad was venturesome, as lads will be, and it seems he was trying to catch some birds, when he slipped and lost his balance, and fell down below there; but he's alive and moaning. You see, sir, the jutting crags, though they scratched and bruised him broke his fall. The question is, how to get him up? Most of the men are away, and those here daren't venture life and limb."

But long before she had finished Sidonie had flown up the path, had caught her father's hand, crying,—

"Father! father! Oh, our poor Algry!"

And in this awful moment, when his second and only living son seemed about to be taken from him, he forgot her offence, and seemed indeed to find comfort in her presence. Even when Lionel joined them he made no sign of repulsion.

"Are there no ropes obtainable?" asked the latter, in a low quiet voice; and one man answered,—

"Yes; but it's almost as much as life's worth to try a descent. Poor lad, I fear his leg is broken. That's his father, sir, and he's about demented. Many a poor fellow has gone over the Point and lain there till the tide came and washed him out to sea!"

"Where are the ropes?" impatiently. "Here? Why did you not say so before?" and he began to fasten one about his body. "You men are strong enough to bring us up?"

"You'll never get down in safety, sir, much less up. Better not attempt it; it's making bad worse."

Sidonie stood silent, her beautiful face distorted with anguish, but she said no word to detain him; and when the ropes were adjusted he turned to her and kissed her, there before them all, saying,—

"Wish me God-speed, sweet wife!" Then he spoke to Mr. Thorne. "Sir, if I bring him back to you alive, perhaps you will pardon the past; if I do not come back, be good to Sidonie."

Then he began his perilous descent, whilst the crowd watched with bated breath and straining eyes; but Sidonie sat apart with hidden face, praying as in all her life she had never prayed before. Slowly, and with difficulty he made his way past crags and dangerous points, protecting his face as best he could.

Lower and lower, whilst his heart beat fast, and all his soul cried to Heaven for help, and help came surely, as Sidonie knew by the cheer which rent the air as he reached the narrow strip of stony beach, and bent over the prostrate boy.

He was alive, but senseless, and, having fastened the rope about his body, he shouted to the men to draw them up.

It was a terrible time. Lionel's hands were torn and bleeding, his strength almost spent, his heart throbbed madly against his side, his senses seemed to swim; but the thought of Sidonie bore him up, braced his nerves for the final struggle.

If the rope should break now! It was chafed by contact with the sharp rocks, some of the strands were broken! Heaven grant it might hold out a little while—only a little while. And then, indeed, sense deserted him; and he knew no more until he woke to find himself laying on the bush grass, with kindly faces bent above him, and Sidonie's grateful tears upon his brow.

"Where is the boy?" he asked, starting to his feet. "Did I save him?"

"Yes, yes, my dear; he is quite safe, but sorely bruised, and we fear his leg is broken. They are taking him home now. Some other time my father will thank you," as her eyes followed his retreating figure.

He was bending over his boy; but suddenly he halted, turned back, and came running back towards them with wonderful agility. He seized Lionel's hand and wrung it violently.

"The debt is paid! You have more than

made atonement! Heaven bless you!" and then he was gone.

* * * * *

Not a cloud remained on Sidonie's sky. The alien was received again into her family. The man whose name had been so detested, who had been reviled and hated, was now esteemed the best and noblest of his fellows, and Algry tried comically to model himself on his brother-in-law.

The boy will never quite lose two evidences of his narrow escape from death—a slight limp and a vivid scar upon the temples—but, as he says to Sidonie,—

"What are the odds as long as you're happy?"

[THE END.]

AUNT DORA'S PLOT.

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CHAPTER XIII.—(continued.)

The ex-Mayoress of Muddlesboro' and her charming daughters have been duly received by the lady of Grayfriars. In short, Lady Steyne's reception of Lady Bantam has been so gracious that the latter, inflated by a new sense of importance, on leaving Grayfriars orders her coachman to drive to Lady Margaret Stewart's, in order to submit her equi-page and her own and her daughter's toilets to the inspection and envy of that noble and incomparable lady and her daughters.

The ladies were in the drawing-room.

The drawing-room at the Stewarts' cottage ornée was famous for its refined luxury and art decorations. To-day it looks charming, with its old oak furniture, and bric-à-brac, and countless souvenirs of past greatness. Every available spot is filled with sweet summer blooms, that make the air heavy with fragrance.

Lady Margaret and her daughters had called upon Lady Steyne on the previous day, and had been introduced to some of the guests at Grayfriars.

Two of these fashionable men from London had just called upon the Stewarts—a few minutes before the Bantams arrived.

These two men were Major Gurney, of the Blankshire Regiment, and young Clayton, of the Blues, a handsome stripling, and the only son of a millionaire.

The Major is a fine soldierly man, with a magnificent coal-black beard and splendid black eyes.

He is a man with a long line of ancestors, and more blue blood in his veins than money in his pocket.

Major Gurney has been the pet of the West-end drawing-rooms for several seasons, his one idea being that he must retrieve his tottering fortunes by marriage. He must marry money—that is his only chance.

But though he had many flirtations, and many maidens rich and fair had smiled upon him, yet they all jilted him, or some other clever stepped in and bore off the coveted prize, leaving the Major in the lurch.

A few weeks prior to his visit to Grayfriars, a young lady, to whom he was paying marked attention, threw him over for a rich city man. He was just recovering from the disappointment and mortification consequent on the false one's treachery, when he met his young friend, Fred Clayton, of the Blues, at Brooks's.

Young Clayton, touched by the Major's despondency, insisted upon him accompanying him to his father's house to dinner. One of the guests on that occasion was Lord Steyne, who invited Fred Clayton to Grayfriars, and extended the invitation to his friend.

This is how Major Gurney came to be at Grayfriars; and the Major was a most desirable addition to the housewarming revels at the ancient home of the De Veres.

Among the men he was acknowledged to be the best fencer, the best rider, the best rower.

the best billiard, football, and cricket player, Among women, the best dancer, the best talker, the best lawn-tennis player.

On the day previous to Lady Bantem's visit to Lady Margaret Stewart, the latter, with her daughters, had called upon Lady Steyne. At Grayfriars they met, and were introduced to Major Gurney and Fred Clayton, when both men seemed greatly charmed with the young ladies.

Fred Clayton was most profuse in his praise of the younger sister Ethel, who was about his own age. His friend preferred the elder sister Lillian.

"Ah, dear boy, if I only had a Cresus for a father like you, I would propose to Lillian at once. But she is not for me—she is not for me. She must look out for a rich husband, as I must look out for a rich wife!"

Lady Margaret's guesses were scattered in little groups through the pretty bijou drawing-room when Lady Bantem and the Misses Bantem were announced.

Dressed in what some time had been a costly black lace gown, Lady Margaret looked as she always did—a perfect gentlewoman, and received the ex-Mayoress of Muddlesboro' with the air of a grand duchess—an air for which her portly visitor envied her most heartily—an air which that lady could never hope to acquire, and which her fabulous wealth could not buy.

Lady Margaret introduced the new arrivals to those of her guests whom she did not know, then made room for Lady Bantem on the low couch beside herself, that lady being too much overcome by the heat to be able to talk much.

"You called upon Lady Steyne yesterday? What do you think of her?" she managed to gasp, as she mopped her hot face with a wisp of white lace that stood proxy for a hand-kerchief.

"Think of her, Lady Bantem! I assure you that Lady Steyne is the most high-bred, as well as the best-dressed woman I have met for many years. And she has passed nearly all her life at the Antipodes; and we English look upon them out there as semi-savages! Ah, the late Lord Steyne knew what he was doing when he married the miner's widow!"

"So I think. Lady Steyne is most charming!"

"Yes. She is a beautiful old lady, whose heart will be always young, no matter how many years she may live. And as for her toilet, it is perfect, though simple. She seems surrounded by an aroma of wealth. The very swish of her gown reminds one of the rustle of bank notes!"

Lady Margaret fanned herself gracefully, and following the direction of Lady Bantem's eyes to where the young people sat in two groups.

Ethel Stewart is looking over a book of engravings, while Fred Clayton has a good view of them from behind her chair, if he cared to look, but he is watching the delicate outline of her profile, and inhaling the faint perfume of her silky, pale-brown hair.

Josephine Bantem, looking fat and good-natured, and as handsome as a handsome and marvellously fitting gown can make her, sits near them, regarding, what she considers, a new flirtation with complacent amiability.

Not far from this group Lillian Stewart is seated, plying her needle with swift, white fingers. She is embroidering something in a frame with many-coloured silks. There is an unusual colour in the girl's fair cheeks, for she feels that Major Gurney's big black eyes are fixed on her face.

Carry Bantem sits beside her, and the Major's attention is divided between them. Lillian he seems to admire very much, while he seems very anxious to please the younger Miss Bantem.

That young lady is in good spirits and perfect good humour with herself. She knows that she is not beautiful, but she also knows that she is not quite bad-looking; her figure is passable, not so full as her sister's, but just plump enough to set off a well-made gown.

She is young. That is half the battle, she tells herself; for youth is always fair to see, however plain. She is rich. How often in this world do riches stand proxy for youth and beauty? How few gaps are there in some lives that may not be filled with gold?

Carry Bantem felt that she was richly and beautifully dressed, and that the contrast between her own toilet and that of Lilian Stewart was very striking, though that young lady looks lovely and lovable in a gown of creamy oatmeal cloth, trimmed with imitation lace.

The artist eye might rest longer on the graceful folds of the oatmeal cloth; but to a man who knew the world, like Major Gurney, a rich gown, and its accompaniments were the outward signs of wealth, and with an eye to his own interests he resolved to know more about the Bantems.

Lady Bantem and her daughters soon took leave of Lady Margaret and her daughters and guests, and were attended to their carriage by Major Gurney.

Carry spoke in raptures of him during their drive homeward. It was something for her to receive attention from such a handsome man—an officer and a gentleman, with a long line of ancestors behind him!

When the Major returned to the drawing-room he went straight to where Fred Clayton and Ethel Stewart were sitting.

"Who are those people?" he asks, bending over the young lady's chair.

"You mean the Bantems?" she answers, without looking up from the book of engravings on her lap. "They are very nice people, and enormously rich."

"Very nice! *ni import*. Rich! They possess the open sesame. I need not ask if they are nobodies, if one meets them in Lady Margaret's drawing-room!"

"Oh, they are not nobodies! They are very good people for parvenues. Sir Giles was knighted while occupying the civie chair; and Lady Bantem was heiress to a large fortune made in trade," says Lady Margaret, who had overheard the conversation between her daughter and the Major.

"But they are so stuck up, mamma!" observes the young lady.

"Well, like all self-made people, they are over-anxious to be good form in all things, and commit some amusing blunders in consequence. But I don't dislike them," Lady Margaret says, patronizingly, as Major Gurney recalls the Bantem carriage, with its high steppers, and handsome liveries.

He had resolved to try his fascinations on widows in future; but he had changed his mind within the last half-hour.

A few minutes later the two men took their leave of the ladies, and left the house arm-in-arm.

"Well, Fred, what do you think of the younger Miss Bantem?" the Major asks, between the puffs of his cigar.

"What do I think of her? Why think—or—that she's a stunner! You should go in for Miss Carry, Gurney. If I had seen her before I had fallen head over ears in love with Ethel Stewart I would be now a candidate for her hand!"

"And fortune—eh?"

"No, I wouldn't think of her fortune! She is just the jolly, breezy sort of girl I like!"

"You see you can afford to marry a portionless wife, I cannot," observes the Major regretfully.

"Then place yourself at the head of the list of Miss Carry's admirers."

"They are parvenues—self-made people, while I am a rather obscure offshoot of the old nobility."

"Don't you think the parvenues are the best nowadays? They keep the best tables, the best cellars, the best horses, of any people we meet."

"Then you think Miss Carry—er—might be bearable as a wife for a fellow like me?"

"Certainly. She is stylish and accomplished, and will have a handsome dot when

she marries. Just give her her head, and for all the time you will pass in the society of your wife I think she may be endurable."

"Then I'll think about it."

CHAPTER XIV.

LADY STEYNE VISITS THE HOLLYHOCKS.

The next day a handsome brougham, bearing the Steyne arms, and drawn by a pair of high-stepping greys, turns into one of the iron gates of the Hollyhocks, rolls along the broad, smooth carriage-drive, and stops before the shallow portico steps of the big, unlovely pile of bricks and mortar that is looked upon by the good people of Muddlesboro' as a palatial modern mansion.

Swift as an athlete the footman descends from his seat beside the coachman, and, tripping up the steps, meets one of the Bantem footmen in the doorway, to whom he hands his lady's card.

The gorgeous creature in plush and powder takes the pasteboard falisman and passes it to one of his fellows, who places it on a silver waiter and disappears up the front staircase in search of Annie, the ladies' maid, who took the note to Lady Bantem, who was in the dressing-room with her daughters, to whom her ladyship was reading a letter just received from their London *modiste*.

"Oh! ain't our dresses lovely! Quite too lovely for anything! Don't you think so, Jo?" Carry is saying.

"Yes, they are stylish, very!"

"And ain't it jolly that Major Gurney is so attentive. He is quite gone upon me!"

"I don't know how it is that either of you never seem to get a *bona fide* lover, but always seem to get entangled with a fellow without a shilling in his pocket," says Lady Bantem, in an aggrieved tone.

"But, ma—"

"I wish you wouldn't interrupt, Carry!"

"But, ma, ain't you awfully glad that old Aunt Dora has left? How good of her to go before the fêtes. Horrid old thing!" persists Carry.

"Yes, I am glad Aunt Dora is out of the way. Why, that black gown of hers must have been made quite ten years ago! Besides, if she stayed here there would have been trouble with your pa, if he heard you saucy to her."

"Well, she's a regular old fright. Suppose Major Gurney or Mr. Clayton were to see her?"

"Major Gurney is quite good form as an acquaintance, but not quite so desirable as a husband for a young lady with a dowry of fifty or sixty thousand pounds, and other expectations."

"You mean great expectations, ma."

"What! visitors, Annie? Who is it? Good gracious, it is Lady Steyne. And I a fright like this, too! How do I look, Jo? Nice, do you say? I'm sure I don't—I am quite flushed and rumpled, all through coming in here. What a litter you have made the place in! I'm at home, Annie! Tell Hobbs to show the lady into the drawing-room. Jo and Carry, are you both coming down?"

"I'll come, ma," Jo says, laying aside some dainty fabric she had been stitching.

"I don't care to see Lady Steyne. Now, if Lord Steyne had called it would be different," Carry observes, with a saucy toss of her head.

"I must not look flurried," Lady Bantem remarks, as she leaves the room followed by Josephine, both ladies arranging the drapery on their skirts like tropical birds shaking out their plumage.

As the fru-fru of their gowns die out along the corridor, Carry hears a tap at the door, and looking up from her novel sees Eve Morrison standing in the doorway. The sunbeams pouring through the tall windows skinned radiantly on the slim figure in the clinging gown of pale blue cambric; lighting up the golden hair and fair, flower face with more than usual beauty. Carry never saw a face so

lovely before. The noon sun seemed to glorify it, though Eve looked very grave, and her habitual sweet smile does not play about the lips or eyes to-day.

"Oh!" exclaimed Carry, with a start. "Is it you, Miss Morrison? Come in. Can I find you some sewing? Well, yes, I daresay I can find you something to do, so can my sister when she comes back. Lady Steyne has called, and my sister and mamma are gone down to receive her. How well you look today, Eve! You won't mind me calling you Eve, will you? It may be the sunlight upon your face. Just stand out of the sun. No, it makes no difference. You do look well! You ought to marry well, Eve. Somebody ever so well off will come on the scene and marry you for your own sake, while somebody else will marry me for my money. It is said!"

"Well, Miss Carry, you ought never marry anybody unless you loved him, whether he be rich or poor. I wouldn't!" but Carry did not either hear or heed her. She let her head drop in her hands, and was weeping silently, the tears trickling through her fingers and falling on the open book on her lap.

"Well, don't cry about it, Miss Carry. You must not marry a man who wants you for your money, you know!" Eve says, with a little laugh, that displays her beautiful lips and teeth.

"But how am I to know?" sobbed Carry.

"I think you ought to be able to guess whether he wants yourself or your money."

"I know a gentleman, now, that I could love so dearly, though we are almost strangers. I don't think he knows whether I have money or not, and I don't want him to. He has been very nice and attentive to me, but ma won't hear of me encouraging him. Oh, it is so dreadful to be rich!"

"You wouldn't care to be poor, even for the man you love, Miss Carry. Believe me, there is no trouble in this world so hard to bear as poverty. What would you do, Miss Carry, without your servants and carriages, horses and jewels, and fine dresses, balls and parties? You would not like it."

"Perhaps not. Ah, that is Jo's voice; they are coming back."

"Then I shall go, Miss Carry, and come back again presently when her ladyship is gone."

Eve went out of the room, and Carry wiped her flushed and tear-stained face just as her mother sailed majestically in, closely followed by Josephine. "Mother and daughter looked disconcerted and annoyed.

"To think that I could be so easily imposed upon! To think that I had so little discernment, or knew no better! Well to be sure!"

"What's the matter, ma?"

"Carry, I shall never forgive you! Your impertinence is quite too dreadful for anything!"

"And your insinuations, ma, are quite too dreadfully obscure! I don't know what you mean by my impertinence, ma!"

"I mean your impertinence to Aunt Dora!"

"Aunt Dora again, ma? Why, you'll have Aunt Dora on the brain! What of Aunt Dora now?"

Lady Steyne called just now, hoping to find Aunt Dora here. I was aware that they had met in New Zealand—I thought only as casual acquaintances; but, according to Lady Steyne, Aunt Dora is the dearest friend she has in the world. Aunt Dora did not tell me that when she was here, or I should have acted different. Lady Steyne does not believe in her poverty. She thinks she must have been acting—that she is not poor. Just fancy me not seeing through it all! Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

"And what are you going to do now, ma?" Carry asks, in dismay.

"Well, Lady Steyne asked me to give her Aunt Dora's London address, and she would go up to town and call upon her old friend; but I told her I had not heard from Aunt Dora, and did not know which of her friends she is staying with. How do I know where

your Aunt Smith has packed the silly old thing to? Of course I had to tell Lady Steyne that we are all very fond of Aunt Dora, and awfully sorry that she wouldn't stay with us!"

"And, ma, you told Lady Steyne that your youngest daughter, Carry, was most particularly fond of Aunt Dora!" Josephine says, satirically.

"Oh, ma, how could you!" protests Carry.

"What can you do, ma?" inquires Josephine.

"Don't worry, child! I must go up to town quietly one day this week; go to your Aunt Smith's, find Aunt Dora, take her to Jay's, and get her an outfit of deep mourning—*their* very best, no matter what it costs! Then she must come back to the Hollyhooks. I'll tell Lane to have the south bedroom prepared for her."

"That is if you can manage Aunt Dora, ma!"

old friend Mrs. Bartlett, and bring her back to Grayfriars.

"I must be beforehand with you, my lady. I'll go up to town the day after tomorrow, and hunt up Aunt Dora," Lady Bantem told herself, as she took leave of her hostess on the night of the dinner-party.

"Oh, Eve! I am so pleased to see you! It is so thoughtful of you! I want to ask you to help dress me. My sister and ma are quite enough for Annie; besides, she has no idea of dressing a lady. I wish you would do my hair, Eve; bunched-up on the top of my head, you know. Major Gurney admires that style of coiffure, and I wish to humour him."

"I'll dress you with pleasure, Miss Carry."

"You are going to the fete next Thursday, are you not?" Carry asks, with a quizzical sideway glance at Lane's niece, as she stands where the sunbeams from the window fall on the carpet, glorifying the golden hair and fair face.

"I think so, Miss Carry. I wrote to Madame for permission to stay here until Friday next. I received an answer from Miss Pym, our first-hand milliner, this morning."

"The permission is granted, of course?"

"Well, Madame is very good. She is put to some inconvenience through me being absent from business. It is the wrong time of year to take my holidays. It is the height of the London season, and we usually take our holidays in the slack time. But as I was ill, Madame thought I might as well take mine now as later on. But here is Miss Pym's letter; you may read it, Miss Carry," and Eve draws a letter from her dress pocket, and hands it to the young lady, who is seated to have her hair dressed.

She glanced over the letter. There were four pages, three of them crossed, and written in a large, bold, firm hand.

The perusal seemed to amuse her very much; and when Josephine came into the room Carry asked Eve if she might read the letter to her elder sister.

"Just listen to this, Jo!"

"MY DEAR, DEAR EVE,—

"I am desired by Madame to write and tell you that you may have the four days on condition that you return to London on Friday night next at the latest; and I must congratulate you, my dear Eve, on being such a favourite with Madame to win such concession as that from her. I hope you are enjoying yourself.

"I send the black lace dress by the parcels' post. The light blue satin is the palest we have in stock, dear. How nice you will look in black lace and pale blue satin; and how I should like to be there to dress you, Eve!

"I send you such a lovely set of a bonnet! in black lace and jet; and I send a box of forget-me-nots to trim it. So your bonnet will match your gown, and suit your complexion. No strings, you know."

"You can't think, Eve darling, how I miss you. Though it's the height of the London season, and carriages are stopping at the door all day from twelve to four, Madame is awfully cross, I can tell you, on account of your being away. The men who come here escorting their mothers, sisters, wives, or sweethearts look so utterly spiritless and wretched that the ladies go away without buying anything, or even giving an order, because they want to get the miserable fellows out of the place."

"They come here to stare at you, and not seeing you causes them to slide into the first stage of melancholy. They mope about the show-room, they stare at me, they stare at the open door, as if they expect somebody they are in search of to appear. They stare in the mirrors, they pull their moustaches, they nibble the tips of their gloves, and look limp and stupid generally."

"Young Lord Stanton came here the other day with that dashing little pest, the Hon.

Mrs. Vane-Tracy. You know who I mean. She always has men with her, and is a regular slave-driver. The young lord carried her poodle and parasol, and I spoke to the dog, and twitted him on the nose, while my lady selected some fancy goods. So his lordship continued to whisper in my ear,—‘Er—has that pretty gal with the golden hair got—er—mawwid, or left?’

“So you see, my dear Evie, that you are missed greatly in Bond-street. You ought to marry well, if you play your cards well. I know you were born to be a lady. If so, you must have me for your sewing-woman, and take me away from Bond-street for evermore. With best love, my dear Evie, I remain your true friend,

“HESTER PYM.”

“Poor Hester! she is so good to me!” says Eve, laughing gaily.

“Has your dress and bonnet come yet?” Carrie asks.

“Oh, yes; last night.”

“I suppose they look very pretty?” this in a tone of envy.

“I haven’t looked at them yet, Miss Carry.”

“How can you bear the suspense? I should be dying to see them; wouldn’t you, Jo?”

“There is no suspense to bear. I don’t think of them.”

“Good gracious! What a high old time you milliners in Bond-street must have!”

“You will speak slang!” Josephine interrupted.

“Yes I will, Miss Goody-goody. I like slang.”

“Your hair looks nice, Miss Carry; your dress next, and then your bonnet. It is a lovely toilet! It is such a perfect pink! and your parasol is very dainty. Those garlands of rose-buds have a most charming effect!”

“Yes; my bonnet and parasol are quite too lovely for anything!” gushes Carry, as she views herself in the long mirror, while Josephine leaves the room to finish dressing, feeling much annoyed lest her sister will look better than herself, though their toilets are just alike.

A few hours later Eve was strolling under the sycamores, feeling very lonely and dejected, for she was thinking of Mr. Evelyn, whom she had not seen for several days; Mr. Evelyn, who had not made any attempt to see or write to her. The excitement of Lord and Lady Steyne’s arrival had, no doubt, quite driven her out of his thoughts.

“He is false!” she tells herself. “But what does it matter? I will go away next Friday, and I, too, will forget; and it will be over, and done with!”

Her reverie is interrupted by the sound of wheels upon the smooth drive.

The Bantems have returned from the garden-party at Grayfriars.

Carry spies the tall, slim figure moving slowly in the distant shadow of the trees; and, before the horses come to a standstill, she jumps from the carriage, and hurries after Lane’s niece across the dusty lawn.

“Oh, Eve! wait for me! I want to tell you something. The garden-party was splendid! and Lord Steyne is the most delightful man I ever met; but, best news of all, Major Gurney has proposed, and asked me if he may speak to pa! So, if pa lets me marry him, I’ll be just the happiest girl in the world!”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TENANTS’ FATE.

THURSDAY dawned at last—a glorious day at Grayfriars.

The sun shone resplendent, and the flowers bloomed, and the leaves quivered in the golden light.

A tumultuous murmur of voices mingle with the braying of brass bands. Throngs of people keep pouring through the gates, from the well-to-do farmer to the humbler class of

peasantry. From far and near they come, dressed in their best, to do honour to the new lord of Steyne.

Groups of fashionable men move among the people, or laugh and make merry, while they dispense Lord Steyne’s hospitality to his tenantry.

Stylish and beautiful women gather at the open windows or in the porch, or occupy garden-chairs on the lawn.

Coloured lamps gleam among the trees and shrubs. When the sun sets they will compete with the moon to make night brilliant at Grayfriars.

There are some fine specimens of young men and womanhood among the sons and daughters of the farmers and cottagers.

Lord Steyne has been among them, and made a short speech in acknowledgment of their reception, when the sentiments he expressed, and the promises he made to study their welfare, immediately won their hearts.

Lady Steyne moves about among her guests slowly, but not feebly.

She is truly a beautiful old lady, as Lady Margaret Stewart described her. Majestic and graceful as a queen, her pale, serene face framed in silvery white hair that is beautiful and abundant. Her eyes, light blue, are large and expressive, and seem to have lost but little of their fire. A Marie Stuart cap of soft crepe gives effect to her appearance.

She has laid aside her deep mourning today, and wears black Chantilly lace over black satin; and, whatever may have been said of her parvenu origin, the stamp of ladyhood is on every movement of the new mistress of Grayfriars.

The girls thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and Eve, who has been walking with Lord Steyne, involuntarily lets go her hold on her companion’s arm just as Carry Bantem, arrayed in Indian muslin and cream lace, and leaning on Major Gurney’s arm, stand full in their path. For one moment Carry glares upon Eve and her companion! All brightness and colour fades out of Carry’s face, and her small, dark eyes flash with an evil light.

“Who thought of meeting you round here?” the Major asks, lifting his hat, courteously.

Mr. Evelyn laughed. Eve looked from one to the other in surprise. Carry scowls darkly at her.

“Do you know who you are walking with, Miss Morrison?”

“Yes; Mr. Evelyn!”

“Mr. Evelyn! What an innocent you are! Do you pretend not to know that this gentleman is Lord Steyne? Good gracious, my lord!” she adds, swinging round, and facing Eve’s companion, your lordship must have mistaken this young person for one of Lady Steyne’s guests! She is no lady. She is staying at our house on a visit to Mrs. Lane, our housekeeper, whose niece she is. I am so sorry, my lord, that this should happen!”

“Oh! Miss Carry, Miss Carry, I didn’t know,” Eve moaned, in deepest anguish, as she stepped back from the group, her hands clasped, her face white as death, and her large eyes staring in horror.

Philip de Vere, Viscount Steyne, who had been masquerading among his own work-people and tenantry for several weeks as Mr. Evelyn, was rendered so stupefied by Carry Bantem’s cruel words, that he was deprived of the power of speech or action for several seconds. He heard Eve’s words, and he caught sight of her white face as she turned and fled from the spot. And still Carry railed on indignantly about people not keeping in their proper station, and the presumption of servants and low people.

“What have you done, Miss Bantem? You have so terrified that poor girl; there is no knowing what may happen to her. How could you insult her so? Where has she gone to? Which way did she turn, Gurney? I was so astonished that I did not notice!”

“Back the way you came, towards the

lawn,” and Lord Steyne turned on his heel, and hurriedly retraced his steps in search of the terrified girl.

“Ex—my dear Carry—you, aw—are too hasty—you know—er. You ought not to speak to that young lady like that,” the Major says, as he strokes his long bronze moustache.

“Young lady, indeed! Do you mean that dressmaker girl, Major Gurney?” sneers Carry.

“But he’s awfully fond of her, you know—er—dead gone on her. She’s awfully pwetty—er. He’ll never forgive you.”

“What nonsense, Harry. Let us go on,” Carry answers, snappishly. She is just realizing her error, and her anger turns against herself, though she flirts her fan, as if she didn’t care.

“Let us hurry, mamma and Josephine will be waiting. We have to go home to dress for the ball,” and laying her white-gloved hand on his arm she marched him off.

With Carry Bantem’s insults ringing in her ears Eve Morrison hurries blindly along the smooth path, not slackening her pace until she emerges on the lawn. One quick glance shows her Lady Steyne, still sitting by the portico steps. She dare not look around or linger, lest her aunt should see and beckon to her. If she goes in search of her aunt, and begs her to take her back to the Hollyhocks, it will cause delay, and Lord Steyne will overtake her. Then will follow explanations that will result in much mortification and regret. She could not control herself in his presence, and there would be a scene. She must get away quietly, and never set foot in Grayfriars again.

Her aunt and herself had driven over in the dog-cart, and the light wrap she wore was left in that vehicle, that is still waiting somewhere in the grounds. She cannot go in search of the dog-cart to get her wrap, lest she might meet Lord Steyne. She must get back to the Hollyhocks, and never see him again.

She knows the Bantems must go home to dress for the ball. She must get there before them. She must go as she is, in her lace dress, with its unlined corsage and elbow sleeves, and those great pearls gleaming about her throat and arms.

She moves swiftly between the groups on the lawn, all eyes following the graceful figure until it is hidden from their view by the boughs of the elms. The crash of brass instruments, and the sound of laughter, and the tumult of many voices, grows fainter and fainter. She knows of a private outlet from the grounds of Grayfriars, leading into the quiet lane, running beside the Hollyhocks to the high road.

Eve soon reaches the private exit, and having tied her pocket-handkerchief over her pearl necklace, passed out into the lane turning in the direction of the side door to the Hollyhocks. On reaching this ivy-covered entrance Eve was fortunate to find the door unfastened, and was able to reach her bedroom without meeting anybody. She quickly locked her door, and threw her pretty lace bonnet aside, and flinging herself on the bed sobbed as if her heart would break.

Such a storm of sobs, such a rain of tears! She does not like scenes or emotions, or startling effects, but she cannot help this outburst of sorrow. It is the last tribute to a fallen idol. They are the last sobs, the last tears, he will ever wring from her. The one man in all the world whom she believed she could love and honour had played her false. Knowing her to be a poor girl, he had won her heart by deception in concealing from her his real rank. She would never forgive him, never see him again, never think of him, she told herself.

“Yes, I will go to London to-night, if I can only get away before the ladies or my aunt return. I shall leave a note for auntie, asking her not to worry about me, and to send my box on. I shall be in time to catch the seven-fifteen train to St. Pancras, and send a

telegram to Hester Pym to apprise her of my coming."

CHAPTER XVII.

AUNT DORA'S TRIUMPH.

With this resolve Eve started to her feet, tossing back her bright hair that had become loose, and fell in a glittering cloud about her shoulders. Being a very practical young person she dried her tears, removed her pearl necklace and black lace gown, stuffing them ruthlessly into her box. She bathed her flushed face and fastened up her hair in a golden pile. She then dressed herself in the grey gown, beaded black cape and straw hat, trimmed with mauve satin, in which she travelled from London on that never-to-be-forgotten day on which she first met Mr. Evelyn. She next sat down to write a few lines to her aunt.

"DEAR AUNTIE,—Something has occurred that compels me to go back to London to-night. Don't worry about me, I shall write to-morrow and explain all. Then, like a dear, good auntie, you will put my things in my box and send it on. Don't trouble about me, auntie, or be cross with your poor—EVE."

This she folded and put in an envelope which she laid on the table in her aunt's room. Then putting a few things in her black bag, and taking her white sunshade, she slipped out of the room and out of the house unobserved.

Eve Morrison reached the station without being recognised, and in time to despatch a telegram to Miss Pym at Bond-street, London, requesting that young lady to meet her at St. Pancras at 10.20 p.m.

Having procured a second-class ticket, she ensconced herself in a corner of the carriage, having a great sigh of relief as she did so. But it was not until the June dusk deepened into night, and the grey shadows crept over the corn and pasture-lands, and the "Lights o' London" gave a lurid glow to the horizon, and the summer evening hum of the great city crept nearer, that the girl felt herself safe beyond the reach of her pursuers.

At eleven o'clock that night Lady Steyne retired very much fatigued, leaving her guests to the full enjoyment of the music and dancing. Though feeling weary she sent a servant in search of Lord Steyne. The new peer quickly obeyed the summons.

"Oh, Philip, is the girl really missing? Are you quite sure that she is not still at the Hollyhocks?"

"I am quite sure, mother. I sent two messengers. One says that Mrs. Lane found a note in her room in which Miss Morrison asks her not to worry about her; that she was leaving for London to-night, and would send an explanation to-morrow. My other messenger learnt at the railway station that a young lady, answering her description, had booked for London that evening."

"I shall never forgive Giles Bantem's daughter. The girl must be found, Philip. She is the only living descendant of my sister Helen and my second husband's sister Rose. Rose Hillary's son married Helen Bantem's daughter. Rose and Helen are dead, so are their son and daughter; but Eve, their grandchild, lives to inherit the money that would have been theirs had they been found. George Hillary left a large sum of money to his sister Rose and her descendants, so with what I shall give her Eve will be rich indeed. Strange that both advertisements and detectives failed to find her! Yet she is found here, after all, in the simplest way. And now the one desire of my heart is that you, Philip, will marry her."

"I will never marry any other woman, mother," Lord Steyne answers, solemnly.

"You have a severe account to render, Lane, for the way in which you have brought

up your niece. Such airs and such notions. I don't wonder at Lord Steyne mistaking her for one of her ladyship's guests. There wasn't a lady there looked more stylish than she did in that black lace gown. People ought to dress according to their position, Lane. I don't know what Lady Steyne would think of her if she knew she is only a dressmaker. Lord and Lady Steyne are going to London to-morrow for some weeks. So we shall go up to town to finish the season."

In these words Lady Bantem unb burdened herself to the housekeeper the morning after the bell at Grayfriars, and Eve's flight.

"Just fancy, ma, that designing minx walking with Lord Steyne and pretending not to know him; and those pearls she wore were real. Major Gurney says so; and he knows. The deceitful thing!" sequel Miss Carry, maliciously.

* * * * *

There is a crush of carriages in Hyde-park; the famous exercise ground is still crowded, though it is the end of June, and the season begins to wane. Some of the old magnates have departed to other scenes, but they are not yet missed except by their personal friends.

On this sunny June day the park is at its brightest; the flowers are radiant; the great stately trees stand like a dusky wall, motionless, in the still air. A long line of carriages move slowly from Apsley-gate westward. Opposite the Albert-gate one equipage leaves the line and drives towards the fashionable exit. The carriage contains four people, Sir Giles and Lady Bantem, Miss Bantem, and Mr. Charles Bantem.

"Yes, Giles, I told you from the first, and I tell you so now, that Aunt Dora is my *bête noir*, as Lady Margaret says; but we must take her up to please the De Veres. We cannot offend them, if only for the dear girls' sake!" her ladyship is saying in quite a fume, and fanning herself violently, as the victoria sweeps past the French Embassy, before which there is a well-dressed crowd watching the arrivals to a reception.

"Sensible woman, Lady Steyne; and as for Aunt Dora, she isn't so bad. Can't you drive to what's their names, Em'ly, and see the—"

"Jay's, pa?" suggests Miss Jo.

"Ay, to be sure, Jay's! Well, can't we drive to Jay's, and see one of the leading ladies, and explain what you require, Em'ly. Tell her that money is no object if she can make an old lady presentable, who has lived at the other end of the earth during the last fifty years. If you only persuade Aunt Dora to come and stay with us a week or two, and get a lady from Jay's to call upon us to see what is required, we shall go on all right," Sir Giles advises, merrily.

That gentleman delivered himself of this speech while the victoria is standing still, in consequence of a block in Knightsbridge.

"You must be very firm with Carry. She has been very impudent to Aunt Dora, and she has offended Lord Steyne, by insulting Lane's niece while in his company. I let her go to Richmond with Major Gurney to-day, because I could not take her to Lady Steyne's."

Here the carriage gets clear, and proceeds along Brompton-road without further hindrance until it stops before a modern mansion in the Cromwell-road.

Charles Bantem leaps out, and assists his parents and elder sister to alight. They ascend the broad steps, and pass through a group of servants in gorgeous livery, who are waiting in the hall. One of these gentlemen lead them to the drawing-room, and take Lady Bantem's card to Lady Steyne.

"What a beautiful room! Her ladyship must be quite a patron of high art decorations," observes Jo.

"Er—look at those Japanese monsters! Lady Steyne calls them her curios, I suppose, aw"—lips Charley with an affected air.

"Hideous monstrosities! Ah! there is Lord

Steyne talking to me. You haven't been introduced yet, Chawly."

The heir of the Bantems turned and saw a tall gentleman, who had just entered the room, and was in the act of shaking hands with Sir Giles and Lady Bantem.

He stood with his back to Chawly; but there was something in the back view of that figure that caused Chawly to start, and mentally ejaculate, "By Jove!" A minute later and the man turns, and Charley steps back, muttering, "Dem it all!" most vehemently.

"My lord, my son Chawles has not yet had the honour of an introduction. Come Chawly, and be present—"

"No occasion, my dear Lady Bantem. We have met before; we already know each other. Do we not, Mr. Bantem?"

"Ye—s! er—aw—dem it all!"

"How do you do?" and he shook Chawly's hand warmly, while he smiles so reassuringly that Chawly's self-possession is quite restored, and plucking up courage, he looks Lord Steyne in the face.

"Er—and to think that fellow I met in the railway carriage was Lord Steyne," he muses. Just then the drawing-room door opens, and a swish of silken skirts heralds the entrance of Lady Steyne.

All eyes turn to behold the hostess standing in the doorway—tall, handsome, and distinguished-looking, despite her seventy years.

Sir Giles and Lady Bantem move towards her, and the lady advances to meet them half-way.

"My dear Lady Steyne—"

"My dear Sir Giles! Yourself and Lady Bantem are searching for your aunt, Mrs. Dora Bartlett, are you not?"

"Yes! and I think we shall be able—"

"To find her. She is already found. I am Aunt Dora!"

"Eh!"

"I am Aunt Dora!" Lady Steyne says, holding out both hands.

"Er—aw—by Jove! Here's a chestnut!" from Chawly.

"O ma, we are ruined!" from Josephine, as she staggers back.

Lady Bantem comprehends the situation; but she utters no sound as she sinks softly on the carpet, where she lies a helpless heap of quivering plush and sage-green brocade. Lord Steyne and Chawly raised her with some difficulty, and placed her on a couch, when Sir Giles bent over her and whispered,

"Sit up, Em'ly! Don't be silly. You know it was all your fault. You would snub Aunt Dora."

"Have you no vinaigrette, Josephine? Here, take mine. Hold it to her nostrils; it will revive her if she inhales it. I would rather not summon the servants. Only my little plot, Giles!"

"I am sorry for all this, Lady Steyne. I am sorry you came amongst us in the guise of a poor relation."

"Were I the poorest creature on earth I was your father's sister. And your father and you had all the money myself and my sister Helen would have inherited at my father's death. Knowing how my sister and I had been treated, and being the possessor of fourteen million dollars, I wished to know who were my friends and who my enemies. And I came to see if any descendants of my sister were living, or any relations of my second husband, George Hillary. He had an only sister, and that sister had an only son, who married my sister Helen's daughter; and the only child of that marriage is Eve Morrison, who has always believed herself to be Lane's niece, because she brought her up and educated her, as she did her mother before her."

"When Helen was a widow, and in poverty, she did not apply to you, Giles; she sought her old servant, who was just married. Lane gave her shelter until her death, and kept her child until she grew up and married; and when she died Lane took her baby and brought

her up, and had her taught a business, that she might earn the bread of independence."

"Well, Aunt Dora, let bygones be bygones. You have heard that vulgar old saying that 'blood is thicker than water.'"

"Well, you know the reception I got at the Hollyhocks. But I don't regret it. Had I come there as the rich Lady Steyne I might not have found my precious Eve. Lord Steyne might not have seen her in time to save him from marrying some other woman. Philip, ask Eve to come here."

Lord Steyne raised the velvet portière at one end of the room, and disappeared behind it.

In a few moments he returned with Eve on his arm.

The girl looked surpassingly lovely, but cool and collected; a little deeper colour in her cheeks being the only visible effect of the ordeal she was passing through.

"This is my sister Helen's granddaughter."

"And my promised wife," Lord Steyne adds, proudly.

"And this is my dear adopted son, the son of my most lamented husband, Lord Steyne. As Mr. Johnson he had been Mr. Bartlett's private secretary two years, bearing his exile and loss of rank and title without a murmur. He had such a high-bred air, and such elegant manners, I suspected that he was not what he seemed.

"His deep dejection also impressed me. It required much tact and caution to draw from him the secret of his rank. Then my husband died, leaving me very rich. Mr. Johnson remained my secretary until I became convinced that the best use I could put my money to would be to restore Lord Steyne to his proper rank in his native country, and take his son and heir from obscurity, and give him his place in the world.

"To do this I had to marry him, or my affectionate relatives would have had me placed in a lunatic asylum.

"My husband is dead; but his son is Lord Steyne, and will marry Eve Morrison. There is the luncheon bell, Giles. Let us go down."

Sir Giles suffered himself to be led from the room without a word of comment. Lord Steyne gave his arm to Lady Bantem, now quite recovered, while Eve and Josephine fell to the lot of Chavvy.

"My dear Eve, you take it all as cool as though you were born to the purple!" Josephine whispers to her new-found cousin.

"My dear Lady Margaret, how well you are looking! I feared you were lonely now your two daughters are married."

"Not at all, dear Lady Ingram. You see, the girls both married money, in the shape of Charles Bantem and Captain Clayton, of the Guards."

"Ah, yes; both so rich, you see. And the de Veres, Lady Margaret, what of them?" Lady Ingram inquires, with her charming society smile.

"Well, the Dowager lives in the most delightful seclusion, content to hear and read about her daughter-in-law's triumphs. Young Lady Steyne is quite a woman of fashion. Major Gurney has married Carr Bantem, and her father and Aunt Dora have given them a lot of money. Josephine is the old maid of the family!"

[THE END.]

The origin of the name Canada is laboriously sought in Modern Language Notes for June by Professor A. Marshall Elliott. He pronounces it European and Spanish, finding its nearest primitive meaning to be a glade or swampy pasture, such as bear this designation to-day on the pampas of the Argentine Republic. The fitness of applying such a term to the bold north shore of the St. Lawrence below Quebec—the first tract called Canada—is, however, hardly obvious.

FACETIE.

CUSTOMER (getting his hair cut): " Didn't you nip off a piece of the ear then? " Barber (reassuringly): " Yes, sir, a small piece, but not 'nough to affect the hearin', sir."

FAT MAN: " What costume shall I wear to the masquerade ball? " Cynical Friend: " Don't wear any costume. Tie a string to your ankle, and go as a captive balloon."

" You must not do that, my dear," said a mother to her four-year-old daughter; " nice little girls never do so." " Yes, they do, mamma, sometimes; didn't you just see me do it? "

TOO BRIEF A RELATIVE: " I am sorry, Amy, that you are only my second cousin," he said, as she greeted him with a hasty kiss. " Why so, Harry? " " If you were my sixty-second cousin, you might give me a sixty-second kiss."

BACON: " Good-morning, Yeast; how do you feel to-day? " Yeast: " I've got cold in my chest." " Why, I shouldn't know it. You don't cough any." " Cough? of course not. Why should I? The cold is in my ice chest at home."

LAWYER (drawing will of a sick client): " Your estate is much smaller, sir, than has generally been supposed." Sick Client: " Yes, but that fact must be kept quiet until after the funeral. I want a good showing of grief-stricken mourners."

A STORE is told of a wealthy but parsimonious woman who was not easily affected by the appearance of misery. Being informed that a hungry beggar was eating grass in the front of the house, she exclaimed, " Poor man; take him to the back yard and let him eat the grass there. It grows higher."

ARTIST: " Yes, sir, I can enlarge this photograph and give you a speaking likeness." Widower (whose knowledge of art terms is limited, but who has a very vivid remembrance of the deceased): " A speaking likeness! I would like the portrait, but—but I—er—don't care to have it talk much."

" Just a word with you, young man, before you go. You have been cultivating the acquaintance of my daughter for nearly four months, and I think it is about time to ask your intentions." " That's just what I've been thinking; but Mabel doesn't seem to be able to muster up courage to ask me, or else she has forgotten it's leap-year."

FATHER (whom Bobby has induced to take him): " Now, Bobby, I don't quite understand this. If the man who throws the ball fails to hit the club after three trials, does that put the umpire out? " Bobby: " Pa, do you remember why you sent me to bed last night at seven o'clock? " Father: " Why, n—no." Bobby: " It was for asking foolish questions."

AGRICULTURAL EDITOR: " Please, sir, may I have two weeks' vacation? " Managing Editor: " Why, what do you want with a vacation? You don't have to sit up nights." Agricultural Editor: " I know that; but here I am, fifty-one years of age, and have never yet seen a cow. I really feel as though I ought to get out into the country this summer to see what it looks like."

DISAPPOINTING A PROUD FATHER.—A proud father had, just before dinner, been telling the visitor how clever his little daughter was. He said it was not precocity; it was intelligence. When she learned a thing she knew its value, and she never was known, like other children, to ask foolish questions. " You'll see now. If that child asks a question about anything it will surprise you with its sense." At dinner the conversation turned upon Austria. The intellectual child was taking it all in. In a pause in the talk, she piped out: " Papa! " " What is it, my dear? " said the proud parent, with a pleasing smile, as he looked at the visitor, as much as to say, " Now's your chance; you listen." " Papa, are they all ostriches in Austria? "

AN INDUSTRIOUS COUPLE.

Her work with needle and with thread
Seemed all her thoughts engaging,
Which made me jealous, and I said,

" I wish you'd quit your edging."
Then when aside her work she laid,
And love I got to pledging,
My chair somehow got feet; she said,

" Now, sir, you quit your edging."

TWO OF A KIND.—A man strolled into a fashionable church just before the service began. The sexton followed him up, and tapping him on the shoulder and pointing to a small cur that had followed him into the sacred edifice, said: " Dogs are not admitted." " That's not my dog," replied the visitor. " But he follows you." " Well, so do you." The sexton growled, and removed the dog with unnecessary violence.

A QUEEN CRITTER SHOT.—A distinguished prelate in the Established Church found himself stranded in a little town away down in the wilds of Wales last summer, and had to put up at a farm-house, where he was hospitably entertained. " Do you have many Episcopalians down here? " he inquired of his hostess. " Well, really now, I don't know," she answered; " our carter shot some sort of a queer critter down back of the barn the other day, but he thought it was a squirrel."

SOMEWHAT DISAPPOINTED.—" Ah, John," said a loving young wife, " it seems like tempting providence for you to get your life insured; almost as if you were preparing for death, you know," and she cried a little on the collar of his new coat. " Don't be foolish, little one," he gently remonstrated; " if I should be call'd suddenly you would have five thousand pounds to keep the wolf from the door." " Five thousand pounds, John? " she said, with a convulsive sob; " I thought you were to get it insured for ten thousand."

A WEARIED SCHOOLEBOY.—A young and enthusiastic kindergarten teacher, who believes that much repetition will fix ideas firmly in youthful minds, usually begins her lesson on the ideas of form by holding up an india rubber ball and asking: " Now, children, what is this? " " A globe," is the reply, piped out in childlike treble. The other day she began, as usual, with the ball. " Now, children, what do I hold in my hand? " " Chestnut! " yelled a prompt and cheeky small boy from a back seat. That's the sort of thing, the teacher says, that discourages her.

HUMOROUS BREVITIES.

MR. FANXPAS (to his neighbour at dinner): " You must have thought it awfully stupid in me to have made that remark." " Miss Society: " Why, no; I thought it quite natural."

WHEN A CAT gives an entertainment from the top of the wall it isn't the cat we object to, it's the waul.

A London literary man composes a good many of his poems while riding about the city. He is a hack writer with a vengeance.

She (vindictively): " You need not hope to escape me thus. The wounded heart never forgets! I shall follow you to your grave!" He (with bravado): " Not if you die first."

SMOKELESS GUNPOWDER is the latest addition to the science of war. Now let somebody invent a smokeless cigarette, and peace will have her victories no less renowned than war.

" Four paws from the front, if you please," said a clerical-looking gentleman at the ticket office of the opera the other evening.

SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHER (illustrating the "still small voice"): " What is it, dear children, that makes you feel so uncomfortable and unhappy after you have done something which you ought not to do? " Dear Child: " A lickin'!"

PRINCE PUMPERNICKEL: " Darling Mees Elzie, I loaf you. Pe mine. I am not von ut Sherman's richest brinces, but I haft four thousand thalers a year." Miss Elsie: " Why, pa gives as much a year to our cook." Prince P.: " Well, marry me, and I vill do de cooking."

SOCIETY.

The Princess of Wales has charmed the Emerald Isle by her patronage of Irish trade and manufactures. Her latest purchase is some Irish ducks of the "magpie" species, the pretty birds that have been introduced with so much success of late on the ornamental waters of a great many English parks. The Princess has had these ducks placed on the lake at Sandringham, where they no doubt receive some of the attention and petting which all the favourite live creatures there obtain from their kindly owners.

The Princess Victoria of Wales has, we hear, developed quite a remarkable talent for pastel drawing, and has just completed a most admirable portrait of her mother, which her father has hung up in the little blue-room upstairs in Marlborough House. Of course, all our Princesses have been taught drawing, just as they have been taught music, French, and a host of other things. The Princess Victoria of Wales has in this portrait of her mother given most incontestable proof that she possesses remarkable artistic skill for one so young. It is the Prince's intention to spare no trouble or expense in cultivating this newly-discovered talent in his daughter; and as he is himself an admirable judge of things artistic, she could have no better guide than her Royal father.

WELBECK ABBEY, the seat of the Duke of Portland, is in that portion of Nottinghamshire known as the "Dukeries." The late Duke was a regular hermit, and hid himself from public or private view, burrowing underground like a mole. His successor in the property prefers to live on the surface, and, moreover, loves to associate with his kind. His Grace has just held a very large garden party, which was a most pleasant and representative gathering. Among those invited were the officers of the 10th Hussars from York, in which regiment the brother of the Duke, Lord William Bentinck, holds a commission. A most agreeable time was spent, and the noble owner of the estate added something to his popularity by his affability and genial hospitality. Other peers might do well to follow the example of the Duke of Devonshire and the Duke of Portland.

The Earl of Dudley's coming of age was recently celebrated at Witley Court. There was a county ball at Himley Hall, his lordship's Staffordshire seat, on the 27th ult., and on the following day there was a grand fete at Dudley Castle for the miners and ironworkers in his lordship's employ, when 300 sat down to dinner. On the 29th ult. there was a dinner to the workmen, gardeners, &c., at Himley, and on the 30th there was a military tournament in the park, with a display of fireworks each night.

The Emperor and Empress of Austria intended going to Posenhofen the end of August, to join in celebrating the "diamond wedding" of the Duke and Duchess Maximilian of Bavaria. By the way, in England we give that title to festivities after seventy-five years of married life, but Maximilian and his Duchess Ludovica have only completed their three-score years together. However, as the Archduchess keeps her eightieth birthday at the same time, it is perhaps as well to let the family jubilees come off all at once.

One would have thought that aged ladies would be the last persons to value presents of jewellery, but it appears that they are as keen after this sort of "spoil" as the youngest of their granddaughters. The venerable Duchess of Cambridge received no less than three brooches, the other day, as birthday souvenirs, and seemed more pleased with them than with any other of the gifts that poured in upon her. Her son gave her a brooch and earrings of diamonds and turquoise. George Ranger likes to give good value to his mother, and the gems are very handsome ones.

STATISTICS.

At the close of last year the whites of foreign descent in the United States numbered about 28,000,000, and of American descent 24,000,000. The line dividing the two stocks is drawn at the year 1790 as a convenient and proper point, because at that time the political and social organisation of the country was fairly settled, and the first census taken. Thus the foreign stock now preponderates, though seventeen years ago it was only a little more than half the native stock.

An officer of the board of public charities at Paris undertook to determine how many beggars pretending to be in want of work were sincere, making arrangements with several manufacturing and business concerns to employ every person he might send to them with a letter for three days, at four francs a day. He kept account of the applicants and the results. In eight months he offered 727 of these letters to beggars, 415 of which were refused, 138 were taken but not delivered, and of the remaining 174 persons some worked one day, others only half a day, and but eighteen stayed the three days.

GEMS.

If you read ten pages of a book, letter by letter—that is to say, with real accuracy—you are forevermore, in some measure, an educated person.

In genius there is that alchemy which converts into gold: which from suffering deduces strength, from error clearer wisdom, from all things good.

A NOBILITY and elevation of mind, together with firmness of constitution, gives lustre and dignity to the aspect, and makes the soul, as it were, shine through the body.

VIRTUE consists in making desire subordinate to duty, passion to principle. The pillars of character are moderation, temperance, chastity, simplicity, self-control; its method is self-denial.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

TAPIOCA FRUIT PUDDING.—One-half cupful of tapioca soaked over night in one quart of cold water. In the morning cover the bottom of the baking dish with any kind of fruit, either canned or fresh; sweeten the tapioca with one-half cupful of sugar, add a little salt and nutmeg, pour over the fruit, and bake one hour. Serve with sauce.

ICE CREAM PUDDING.—One pint of milk, one pint of water, one cupful of rice previously cooked, one cupful of raisins, four eggs, beat the yolks with one-half cupful of sugar, mix well, with salt to taste; beat the whites with one-half cupful of sugar to a froth, spread on top, and place in oven to brown; flavour with lemon.

BIRD'S NEST PUDDING.—Pare and core, without quartering, enough quick-cooking, tart apples, to fill a pudding-pan, make a custard of one quart of milk and the yolks of six eggs; sweeten, spice, pour over the apples and bake; when done, beat the whites of the eggs to a stiff froth and mix with six tablespoonfuls of white sugar; spread this on the custard, brown lightly, and serve hot or cold.

SMOKED SALMON.—Boil half a pint of milk, thicken with a tablespoonful of flour, and let it become cold. Mince a pound can of salmon or one pound of fresh salmon. When very fine add a saltspoonful of white pepper. Moisten the minced salmon with the boiled milk, work to a paste, and add bread crumbs if too thin. When wanted, shape into cakes, rolls, or cones, dip in egg and crumbs, and fry in hot fat.

MISCELLANEOUS.

BALZAC, that shrewd and witty observer of human nature, remarked that to a pair of lovers the rest of the world were of no more account than the figures on a bit of tapestry.

ANCIENT human footprints have been found in a volcanic rock in Nicaragua. The prints are described as being nine and one-half inches long, three inches wide at the heel, and four and one-half inches at the toe. The apparent length of the foot itself is eight inches.

"I HAVE never been in a hurry; I have always taken plenty of exercise; I have always tried to be cheerful, and I have taken all the sleep that I needed." These were the rules of health followed by the late Rev. James Freeman Clarke, and he outlived and outworked most of those who began life with him.

A WORD OF ADVICE.—With a wife her husband's faults should be sacred. A woman forgets what is due to herself when she condescends to that refuge of weakness—a female confidante. A wife's bosom should be the tomb of her husband's failings, and his character far more valuable in her estimation than his life. And the same rule applies, vice versa, to husbands.

SABLE ISLAND, on the coast of Nova Scotia, is gradually disappearing, and in a few years more will be totally submerged. During one gale in 1881 a strip of land seventy feet wide and a quarter of a mile long was washed away. In 1775 the island was forty miles long, and two and one-half miles wide. It is now only nineteen and one-half miles long, and less than a mile in width.

THE expression "dark horse," now in such general political use, is said to have first occurred in Lord Beaconsfield's "Young Duke," in the following paragraph: "The first favourite was never heard of, the second favourite was never seen after the distance post, all the ten-to-ones were in the rear, and a dark horse which had never been thought of rushed past the grand stand in sweeping triumph."

HARD TO DO.—Some of the demands made upon our veracity and politeness are almost impossible to meet. It is hard to admit that our shoes hurt because they are too small. To listen cheerfully to a twice-told tale. To love a bore because he is good. To remember debts as vividly as we remember debtors. To be grateful in proportion to the intention of the benefactor rather than in proportion to what we receive. To be as much mortified over a sin as over a mistake in etiquette. To feel as deep a remorse before as we feel after being found out.

THERE is no doubt that one of the most useful qualifications of an orator is a good voice. Burke failed in the House through the lack of it, while William Pitt, through the possession of it, was a ruler there at the age of twenty-one. Mr. Lecky says that O'Connell's voice, rising with an easy and melodious swell, filled the largest building, and triumphed over the wildest tumult, while at the same time it conveyed every inflection of feeling with the most delicate flexibility. The great majority of celebrated orators have been aided by the possession of a good voice.

TAX IR.—Try to compute your *artificial wants*—the number of things which you fancy come under the lists of *must have's*, merely because other people possess them, and not because you would not be quite as well off and as happy in their absence. Try it for one week whenever your fingers are tempted to daily with your purse strings. Record in your memorandum book what in view of this you sensibly resolve not to buy, and see what a nice little sum will be left you for *real necessities*. It is seldom by these last that one is hampered and annoyed. Make the experiment, and see if it is not so. A just economy is not niggardliness; one need not be a miser in avoiding the extravagance of a spendthrift.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

B. C.—Lear was a mythical king of Britain. Read Shakespeare's play of "King Lear."

ANNE.—September 14, 1865, came on Tuesday; April 8, 1868, on Wednesday. We have no record of the weather on either day.

A. D. F.—He would get on if sober and industrious, but he would require a knowledge of the preparation of American drinks.

H. E.—Nemesis is the Greek personification of retribution, or that punishment which sooner or later overtakes the offender.

W. S. S.—Lethe is one of the five rivers of the lower regions. The word means "forgetfulness," and that is the sense in which it is used in the sentence quoted.

M. A.—Orpheus was a mythical Greek poet and musician, who is said to have charmed rocks, trees, wild beasts and the infernal powers by the music of his lyre.

Mrs. ROSLYN.—1. You can only keep writing. We quite agree that it was very unbusiness-like to say the least. 2. The 19th May, 1864, fell on a Thursday, and the 17th March, 1862, on a Monday.

T. T.—Cophetusa is pronounced ko-fet-u-a. It is the name of a mythical king of Africa, of great wealth, who fell in love with a beggar girl, and married her. You will find the story versified by Tennyson in the "Beggar Maid."

W. L.—Hyperion is the name of the sun; a satyr was a demi-god, with the body of a man, the feet and legs of a goat, with short horns on his head, and his body covered with hair. The meaning of the comparison is obvious.

C. S. S.—Apply bruised or macerated geranium leaves to the sore, changing the poultice twice daily, and after a few days wash frequently in a weak solution of carbolic acid. If the cut is clear of inflammation, a daily dressing of vaseline will be efficacious.

"ONE IN TROUBLE"—You all acted like a parcel of children, and no further notice should be taken of the matter by any of you. No doubt you went off in a huff, and, as a gentleman, you should simply give the girl back her handkerchief, with regret that you acted in such a childish fashion.

LADYBIRD.—The lines—
"The rose is fairest when 'tis budding now,
And hope is brightest when it dawns from fears.
The rose is sweetest washed with morning dew,
And love is loveliest when embalmed in tears,"
are by Sir Walter Scott.

AGATHA B.—1. You will obtain all information by writing to the Consul-General of the United States in London, 58a, Old Broad Street, City, E.C. 2. The 21st June, 1870, fell on a Tuesday. 3. You must have a little patience. As to being forward, we believe the daughters of Erin do not come under that category, and we honour them for it. You write a fair hand.

DICK M.—Boastful persons, and such as disregard truth in their statements, are usually to be avoided; those sins, in the lowest point of view, are decidedly against etiquette of good society. No woman can either respect or love a man who is in the habit of deceiving her; nor can a man esteem or love a woman whose statements do not possess the virtue of truth.

JANET.—The word metre is the French measure, and, in the metric system devised by the French Academy commission for a common standard of weights and measures, is equivalent to 39'27079 inches, or 1'0936331 English yards, i.e., a yard and about nine one-hundredths. The metric system is the simplest and most perfect ever devised—the very name of the weight or measure indicating its value.

E. B. S.—Either a black kid slipper or a satin boot or slipper to match the dress is worn for dancing; slippers, however, are preferred. Your party dress should be short. All dancing dresses are now made short. Dresses for dinners and receptions, on the contrary, should have trains. Ball dresses have no sleeves—just a puff or fall of lace at most—and are low or square at the neck. While you are away you can use mitts to match your dress instead of gloves. They are quite fashionable, and are preferable, in summer, to gloves, for those ladies who like yourself, have reason to complain of the excessive perspiration of their hands.

DAISY.—How the fly manages to walk over the smoothest surface with his feet upward, in defiance of the law of gravity, is a phenomenon that is not so difficult of explanation as you imagine. It has been generally supposed that his feet were supplied with valves or suckers, and that he is thus enabled to hold himself upwards by atmospheric pressure. Others have attributed this peculiar power to the secretion of a sticky liquid in the feet, which enables him to sustain himself in this seemingly unnatural position. The microscope has demonstrated that in many insects of the fly kind, the foot is furnished with a pair of membranous expansions termed *pulvilli*, commonly known as valves, and that these are beset with numerous hairs, each of which has a minute disk at its extremity. There is no doubt that this apparatus is connected with the power these insects possess of walking with the feet upwards, but there is still some uncertainty as to the precise manner in which it ministers to this faculty. Recent observations have led to the conclusion that the minute disk at the end of the hairs on the pulvilli act as suckers; each secreting a liquid, though not viscous, serves to make its adhesion perfect.

M.—Some favourite jelly spread upon bread might answer the purpose.

"HIS SISTER."—It is probably flatulence, but you should consult a respectable medical man.

M. M. L.—Glycerine diluted with a little fresh lemon or lime juice will soften and whiten the hands.

F. N.—A cube is a regular solid body, with six equal sides and containing equal angles. A cubic foot is composed of 1,728 cubic inches.

R. V. W.—Papias was an early Christian writer, Bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia. He entertained the idea that there will be for one thousand years after the resurrection from the dead a bodily reign of Christ on earth; and from him millenarians were sometimes called Papians.

L. L.—Seeing that the gentleman's failure was his loss and not yours, it would be a generous act to make an occasion for a repetition of the experiment. "At Home," does not mean to receive every one. You are quite right in confining your guests to those you admire, or to those whose more intimate acquaintance you desire.

N. T.—A mortgage constitutes a lien on the property by the person mortgaging it; a physician's bill for professional services rendered is a personal matter; consequently, in order to recover the amount of his bill, the physician would be under the necessity of suing the patient personally. The claims of the mortgage must be satisfied the same as any others, with the exception of taxes.

RECOMPENSE.

STRAIGHT through my heart this fact to-day
By Truth's own hand is driven;
God never takes one thing away,
But something else is given.

I did not know in earlier years
This law of love and kindness;
But without hope, through bitter tears,
I mourned in sorrow's blindness.

And, ever following each regret
For some departed treasure,
My sad, repining heart was met
With unexpected pleasure.

I thought it only happened so—
But time this truth has taught me;
No least thing from my life can go,
But something else is brought me.

It is the law, complete, sublime,
And now, with faith unshaken,
In patience I but bide my time,
When any joy is taken.

No matter if the crushing blow
May for the moment down me:
Still back of it waits love, I know,
With some new gift to crown me.

E. W. W.

E. W. W.—We do not physically make ourselves in this world; if we did, we should be far different from what we are. You should be contented with the form that God has given you and not seek, by abusing and starving yourself, to make a delicate figure of what was never, by your own confession, intended as such. Diet well, and take health exercise, and these you will find good remedies for reducing surplus flesh.

S. T.—If men or women commit a wrong they should do all in their power to stow for the injury done, and having done this the world should be willing to condone the offence, and not endeavour to remind them of that wrong-doing. "To err is human, to forgive divine," is an aphorism, which all should bear in mind. In regard to the circumstances of which you write it behoves you to be more discreet, and do not force your love upon a man who has not the courage to declare his intentions. A man should never trifling with the affections of a lady by paying her marked attentions when he does not contemplate marriage. A female coquette is bad enough; a male one is intolerable. Let there be a clearly defined distinction between the attentions of common courtesy or of friendship and those of love.

DOLLY R.—You want to know how to receive and entertain company. The request covers a great deal of ground, and we should have preferred that you had mentioned what kind of company you have in your eye. If the visitor you expect is a young lady, in preparing a room for her, try to make it as cheery as possible. A vase of flowers on the mantel, a few interesting books on the table, an easy-chair in the pleasant corner, are little touches which will show your guest that her coming was looked forward to with pleasure. Let her feel that the blessed boon of privacy is not denied her.

If she is fond of books leave her in peace for a quiet reading time, and bear in mind that the true hospitality lies in letting your guests enjoy themselves at times in their own way, rather than insisting that they shall enjoy themselves in yours. Be careful not to question your friend too closely about her personal affairs, for, being your guest, she will feel obliged to answer. Make up little parties among your lady friends have afternoon teas, go in a company of three or four to visit some art-room or other place of interest. In this way your friend will not feel as though she were among strangers. You need not indulge in expensive pleasure when there is so much you can enjoy that will come within your means.

DORA.—To remove hair from wrists and arms without shaving use a pair of tweezers.

PUNZED.—The quotation, "Incertum est quoniam longa vita futura sit," in Latin, and means: "It is uncertain how long life will be."

C. S. M.—We certainly believe that fortune-tellers are humbugs and swindlers, and that those who consult them are extremely foolish. You would gain nothing by "trying the experiment" of sending the fee for a consultation. How could your friend determine that the mind-reader had "accurately revealed" her future?

E. L. B.—The number of natives of Germany living in New York is variously estimated. The best judges think the number is in the vicinity of 50,000 or 60,000, but it has been stated in some newspapers to be 300,000. The number of Irish-born persons in the city—that is, persons born in Ireland—is estimated at 125,000, but we do not know whether the estimate is correct or not.

R. V.—There is, perhaps, no surer sign of folly and egotism than a constant carpings at small faults peculiar to those we love. Human nature is very far from perfect; as the finest china may have a flaw in it. You are too fidgety and exacting, and if you persevere in what you call "wholesale surveillance," you will only estrange those whom you profess to love and esteem.

P. S. W.—The delicious breakfast puffs are the envy of every good housekeeper. They are made as follows:—Take two eggs, well beaten, and stir into a pint of milk a little salt, a piece of butter, and a pint and a half of flour. Beat the egg and stir the milk, add the salt, melt the butter and stir in, then pour all into the flour, so as not to have it lumpy. Stir up thoroughly, and grease the cups into which the batter is poured, filling them two-thirds full. Eat with sauce.

C. N. S.—It is known that the Chinese, as early as 903 A.D., fastened rockets to their arrows, that the latter might be thrown to a greater distance. This, however, was not the real origin of the use of gunpowder with projectiles—gunpowder artillery having been used in China as early as 85 A.D. The Moorish King of Cordova, Abd-el-Mumen, used rude artillery in 1156 against the Sicilians, but A.D. 1327 is the earliest record we have of the use of artillery by the English; and it was not till 1521 that cast cannons were first made in this country.

ROSEY.—To prepare rabbit skins, lay the skins on a smooth board, the fur side underneath, and tack it carefully in every direction with tinned tacks. Dissolve two ounces of alum in a pint of warm water, and with a sponge dipped in the solution moisten the surface all over. Repeat this every now and then for three days. When the skin is quite dry take out the tacks, and rolling it up loosely the wrong way, the hair inside, draw it quickly backward and forward through a large, smooth ring, or anything of a similar kind, until it is quite soft; then roll it the contrary side of the skin, and repeat the operation.

M. M. S.—Fine and precious opals are profusely met with in Mexico; the former in the district of Zimapán, Esperanza, and others; the latter only in those of Esperanza, Amecameca, and Real del Monte. One of the finest specimens of the precious opal was sent by the Mining School of Mexico to the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia. It had a beautiful variety of colours, and was imbedded in a mass of silicicorous porphyry, which contained a large quantity of nodules, formed by opals or by a strata resembling onyx. The principal varieties of this stone found in Esperanza are the Mexican, Hungarian, Gersao, Milky, and Harlequin. The first-named is noted for its emerald-green and copper-red tints.

L. L. T.—We are not at all surprised at the young lady's conduct. You have been paying her regular attention for over a year, and during that time have shown your affection in various ways, but have made no verbal or written declaration of it. It is quite possible that she loves you, as you think, but she could not, without a sacrifice of maidenly modesty, manifest it until you had given her the opportunity by first revealing your own feelings towards her. Your failure to do so on occasions when you had led her to think that you were about to give word to your preference may have led her to think you required a little disciplining, and we think she is right. Now that you have lost the opportunity to address her otherwise, the only course left is to write her a straightforward, manly letter.

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